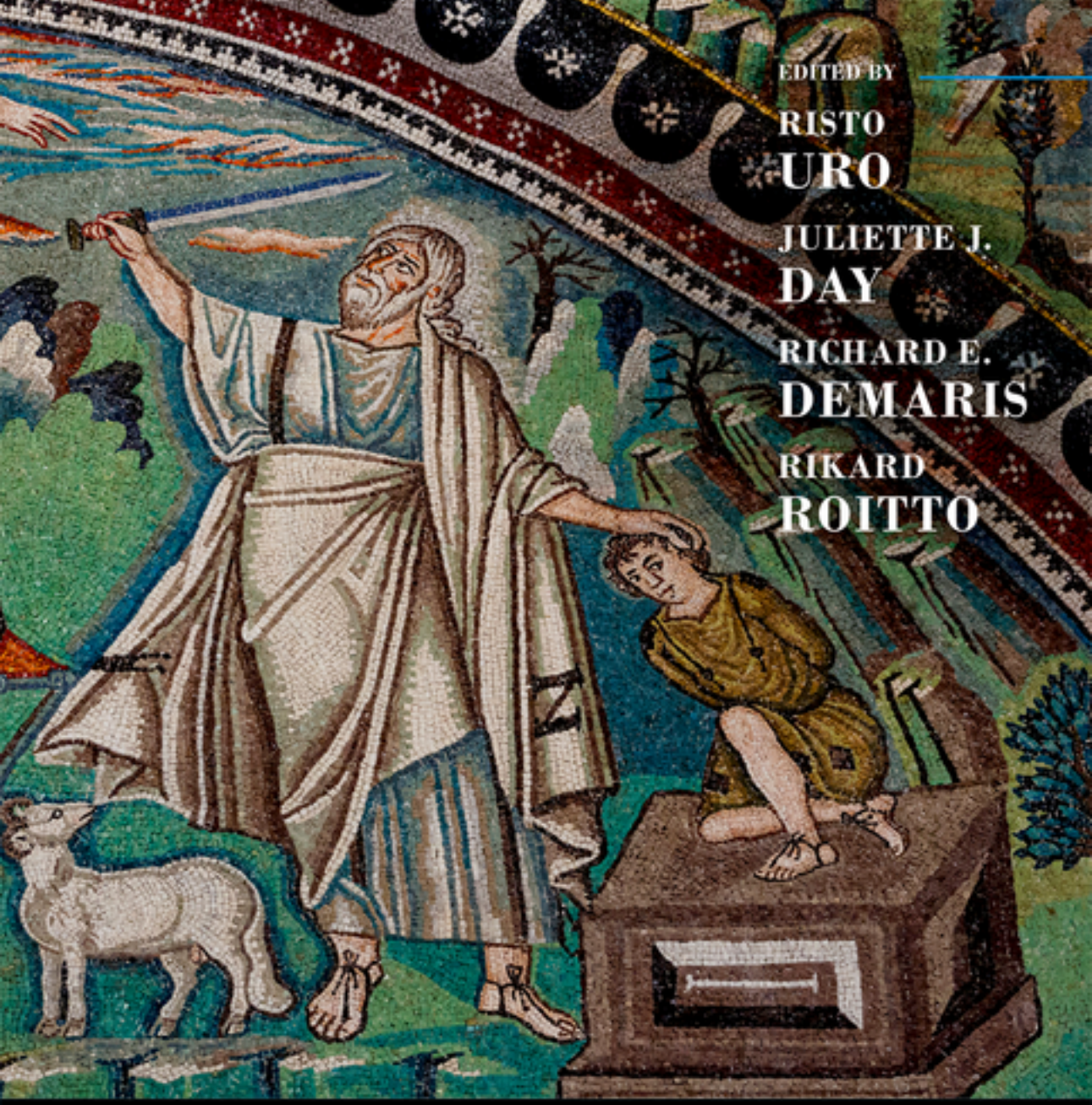

EDITED BY

RISTO URO

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RICHARD E. DEMARIS

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The Oxford Handbook *of* EARLY CHRISTIAN RITUAL

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OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
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First Edition published in 2019

Impression: 1

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Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018961235

ISBN 978–0–19–874787–1

Printed and bound by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

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Acknowledgements

This *Handbook* emerged from a collaboration between a collective research project 'Ritual and the Emergence of Early Christian Religion' (REECR; Academy of Finland project #1266452), led by Risto Uro, and two experts in ritual and early Christian studies, Juliette Day and Richard E. DeMaris. Two members of the REECR project, Risto Uro and Rikard Roitto, formed an editorial team with Day and DeMaris, but other members and external advisors supported the *Handbook* project in a number of ways. The editors would like to thank Nina Nikki for her valuable assistance in technical editing, Anne Katrine Gudme, Vojtěch Kaše, and István Czachesz for their continuous support and feedback at various stages of the project. The REECR external advisors Joseph Bulbulia, Douglas Davies, and Armin W. Geertz also supported the *Handbook* project during the whole process.

We would like to thank Tom Perridge for his advice and encouragement at the beginning of the project as well as other staff and affiliates at Oxford University Press: Karen Raith, Susan Dunsmore, and Sai Sarath Ram. We are grateful to Ellen Valle for editing the English language of three chapters (1, 23, 25).

Finally, we would like to thank all our contributors for their willingness to take part in our interdisciplinary enterprise and for their patience in the process of its production.

Risto Uro
Juliette Day
Richard E. DeMaris
Rikard Roitto

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Abbreviations

Periodicals, Collections, and Reference Works

AE	*L'Année épigraphique*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1888–.
AGRW	Ascough, Richard S., Philip A. Harland, and John S. Kloppenborg. *Associations in the* Greco-*Roman World: A Sourcebook.* Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012.
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers Series.
CIL	*Corpus inscriptionum latinarum*. Consilio et auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Regiae Borussicae editum. Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1862–.
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.
FC	Fathers of the Church Series.
***GRA* I**	Kloppenborg, John S. and Richard S. Ascough. *Greco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations, and Commentary*. Vol. I. *Attica, Central Greece, Macedonia, Thrace*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 181. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2011.
***GRA* II**	Harland, Philip A. *Greco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations, and Commentary*. Vol. II. *North Coast of the Black Sea, Asia Minor*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 204. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014.
IApamBith	Corsten, Thomas. *Die Inschriften von Apameia (Bithynien) und Pylai*. Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien 32. Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1987.
ID	Durrbach, Félix, Pierre Roussel, Marcel Launey, André Plassart, and Jacques Coupry. *Inscriptions de Délos*. 7 vols. Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1926–1973.
IDelta	Bernand, A., ed. *Le delta égyptien d'après les texts grecs, 1: Les confines libyques*. 3 vols. Mémoires publies par les membres de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire 91. Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1970.
***IG* II²**	Kirchner, Johannes, ed. *Inscriptiones Atticae Euclidis anno anteriores*. 4 vols. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1913–1940.

***IG* IV², 1**	Hiller von Gaertringen, Friedrich, ed. *Inscriptiones Graecae*. Vol. 4: *Inscriptiones Argolidis*. 2nd edition. Fasc. 1: *Inscriptiones Epidauri*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1929.
***IG* X/2.1**	Edson, Charles, ed. *Inscriptiones graecae Epiri, Macedoniae, Thraciae, Scythiae*. II: *Inscriptiones Macedoniae*, Fasc. 1: *Inscriptiones Thessalonicae et viciniae*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1972.
IGLSkythia	Pippidi, D. M. and Iorgu Stoian, eds. *Inscriptiones Scythiae Minoris graecae et latinae. Inscripțiile din Scythia Minor grecești și latine*. Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste Romania, 1983–. I: Inscriptiones Histriae et vicinia (1983); II: Tomis et territorium (1987); III: Callatis et territorium (2000).
IGRR	Cagnat, Rene L., J. F. Toutain, V. Henry, and G. L. Lafaye, eds. *Inscriptiones graecae ad res romanas pertinentes*. 4 vols. Paris: E. Leroux, 1911–1927.
IGUR	Moretti, L. *Inscriptiones graecae Urbis romae*. 4 vols. Studi pubblicati dall'Istituto per la Storia Antica 17, 22, 28, 47. Rome: Istituto Italiano per la Storia Antica, 1968.
ILLPRON	Hainzmann, Manfredus and Peter Schubert. *Inscriptionum lapidariarum latinarum provinciae Norici usque ad annum MCMLXXXIV repertarum indices*. 2 vols. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986–1987.
LCL	Loeb Classical Library.
LIMC	*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*.
LKU	Falkenstein, A. *Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Uruk*. Berlin: Staatliche Museen, 1931.
LSS	Doran, Robert, and Susan Ashbrook Harvey. 1992. *The Lives of Simeon Stylites*. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications.
NHC	Nag Hammadi Codices.
***NPNF*¹**	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* Series 1.
***NPNF*²**	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* Series 2.
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
PCairoDem	Spiegelberg, W., ed. *Die demotischen Denkmäler*. II. *Die Demotischen Papyrus*. Leipzig: Dragulin, 1908.
PG	*Patrologia Graeca,* ed. J.-P. Migne.
PGM	*Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*. Edited by Karl Preisendanz. Revised by Albert Henrichs. 2 volumes. Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1973–1974.
PL	*Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne.
***PLond* VII**	Skeat, T. C., ed. *Greek Papyri in the British Museum* VII. *The Zenon Archive*. London: British Museum, 1974.
PMich	Boak, A. E. R. *Papyri from Tebtunis* (Michigan papyri II and V). 2 vols. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1933–1944.

RSV	Revised Standard Version.
SAA	State Archives of Assyria.
SC	Sources chrétiennes. Paris: Cerf, 1943–.
SEG	*Supplementum epigraphicum graecum*. Leiden: Brill, 1923–.
***SIG*³**	Dittenberger, Wilhelm. *Sylloge inscriptionum graecarum*, 3rd edn, 4 vols. Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1915–1924.
***TAM* V**	Herrmann, Peter. *Tituli Lydiae linguis graeca et latina conscripti.* Tituli Asiae Minoris, vol. 5/1–2. 2 vols. Vienna: Academia Scientiarum Austriaca, 1981.
TRE	*Theologische Realenzyklopädie*. Edited by Gerhard Krause and Gerhard Müller. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977–.

Ancient sources

Aeschylus

Ag.	*Agamemnon*
Cho.	*Choephori*
Eum.	*Eumenides*
Pers.	*Persae*

Ambrose of Milan

Ep.	*Epistulae*
Sacr.	*De Sacramentis*
Virg.	*De virginibus*

Ambrosiaster

Quaest.	*Quaestiones veteris et novi testamenti*

Anonymous

Acts Paul	Acts of Paul
Acts Thomas	Acts of Thomas
AL	*The Armenian Lectionary*
(Arab.) Inf. Gos.	Arabic Gospel of the Infancy
Barn.	Epistula Barnabi
Can. Hipp.	*Canones Hippolyti*
Const. ap.	*Constitutiones apostolorum*
Cod. theod.	Codex theodosianus
Did.	Didache
Did. apost.	*Didascalia apostolorum*
Gos. Mary	Gospel of Mary
Mart. Pol.	Martyrdom of Polycarp
Morb. Sacr.	*De Morbo Sacro*

Prot. Jas.	Protevangelium of James
Test. Dom.	*Testamentum Domini*
Trad. ap.	*Traditio apostolica*
Vend.	*Vendidād*

Appian

Bel.	*Bella civilia*

Apuleius

Apol.	*Apologia*
Metam.	*Metamorphoses*

Aristeas

Let. Aris.	Letter of Aristeas

Aristophanes

Plut.	*Plutus*
Thesm.	*Thesmophoriazusae*

Aristotle

Ath. pol.	*Constitution of Athens*
Eth. nic.	*Ethica nicomachea*
Pol.	*Politica*

Arrian

An.	*Anabasis*

Athanasius of Alexandria

C. Ar.	*Orationes contra Arianos*
Ep. Marcell.	*Epistula ad Marcellinum de interpretatione*
Syn.	*De synodis*

Athenaeus

Deipn.	*Deipnosophistae*

Athenagoras

Leg.	*Legatio pro Christianis*

Augustine of Hippo

Civ.	*De civitate Dei*
Conf.	*Confessiones*
Enarrat. Ps.	*Enarrationes in Psalmo*

Aulus Gellius

Noct. att.	*Noctes atticae*

Basil of Caesarea

Spir.	*De spiritu sancto*

Basil of Seleucia

Mirac. Theclae	*Miraculae Theclae*

Cato

Agr.	*De agricultura*

Cicero

Att.	*Epistulae ad Atticum*
Div.	*De divinatione*
Dom.	*De domo suo*
Fin.	*De finibus*
Leg.	*De legibus*
Off.	*De officiis*
Pis.	*In Pisonem*
Sest.	*Pro Sestio*

Clement of Alexandria

Exc.	*Excerpta ex Theodoto*
Paed.	*Paedagogus*
Strom.	*Stromateis*

Columella

Rust.	*De re rustica*

Constantine Porphyrogennetos

Cer.	*The Book of Ceremonies*

Cyprian of Carthage

Dom. or.	*De dominica oratione*
Don.	*Ad Donatum*
Ep.	*Epistolae*
Hab. Virg.	*De habitu virginum*
Laps.	*De Lapsis*
Unit. eccl.	*De catholicae ecclesiae unitate*

Cyril of Jerusalem

Catech.	*Catecheses ad illuminandos*
Procatech.	*Procatechesis*

Cyril/John of Jerusalem

Catech. myst.	*Catecheses mystagogiae*

Damasus of Rome

ED	*Epigrammata*

Dionysius of Halicarnassus

Ant. rom.	*Antiquitates romanae*

Egeria

It. Eg.	*Itinerarium*

Epictetus

Ench.	*Enchiridion*

Epiphanius of Salamis

Pan. or ***Haer.***	*Panarion (Adversus haereses)*

Euripides

Bacch.	*Bacchae*
El.	*Electra*
Hel.	*Helena*
Heracl.	*Heraclidae*
Hip.	*Hippolytus*

Eusebius of Caesarea

Hist. eccl.	*Historia ecclesiastica*
Vit. Const.	*Vita Constantini*

Gerontius

Vit. Mel.	*Vita s. Melaniae Iunioris*

Gregory of Nazianzus

C. Jul.	*Contra Julianum*
Ep.	*Epistulae*

Gregory of Nyssa

Vit. Mac.	*Vita s. Macrinae*

Gregory of Tours

Vit. Mart.	*Vita s. Martini*

Hermas

Mand.	Mandates
Sim.	Similitude(s)
Vis.	Vision(s)

Herodotus

Hist.	*Historiae*

Hippocrates

Morb. sacr.	*The Sacred Disease*

Hippolytus

Haer.	*Refutatio omnium haeresium*

Homer

Il.	*Iliad*
Od.	*Odyssey*

Horace

Carm.	*Carmina*
Ep.	*Epistulae*

Iamblichus

Myst.	*On the Mysteries*
VP	*The Life of Pythagoras*

Ignatius of Antioch

Ign. ***Eph.***	*To the Ephesians*
Ign. ***Magn.***	*To the Magnesians*
Ign. ***Phil.***	*To the Philadelphians*
Ign. ***Pol.***	*To Polycarp*
Ign. ***Rom.***	*To the Romans*
Ign. ***Smyrn.***	*To the Smyrnians*
Ign. ***Trall.***	*To the Trallians*

Irenaeus of Lyon

Haer.	*Adversus Haereses*

Jerome

Comm. Ezech.	*Commentariorum in Ezechielem*
Epist.	*Epistulae*

John Chrysostom

Adv. Jud.	*Adversus Judaeos*
Bab.	*De sancto hieromartyre Babyla*
Catech.	*Catecheses*
Exp. Ps.	*Expositiones in Psalmos*
Hom. Act.	*Homiliae in Acta apostolorum*
Hom. Gen.	*Homiliae in Genesim*

Hom. Rom	*In epistolam ad Romanos homiliae*
Mart.	*Homilia in martyres*
Philog.	*De beato Philogonio*
Stat.	*Ad populum Antiochenum de statuis*
Stud. praes.	*De studio praesentium*

Josephus

Ant.	*Antiquitates Judaicae*
J.W.	*Jewish War*

Justin Martyr

Apol.	*Apologia*
Dial.	*Dialogus cum Tryphone*

Lucian

Alex.	*Alexander*
Philops.	*Philopseudes*
Salt.	*De saltatione*
Symp.	*Symposium*
Ver. hist.	*Vera historia*

Macrobius

Sat.	*Saturnalia*

Mark the Deacon

Vit. Porph.	*Vita Porphyrii*

Martial

Epig.	*Epigrammata*

Minucius Felix

Oct.	*Octavius*

Mishnah (m.)

Ber.	Berakot
Hag.	Hagigah
Ket.	Ketubbot
Meg.	Megillah
Mo'ed Qat.	Mo'ed Qatan
Pesah.	Pesahim
Ta'an.	Ta'anit

Nag Hammadi codices

Treat. Res.	I 4 Treatise on the Resurrection
Gos. Phil.	II 3 Gospel of Philip

1 Apoc. Jas.	V 3 (First) Revelation of James
Interp. Know.	XI 1 Interpretation of Knowledge

Novatian

Spect.	*De spectaculis*

Optatus of Milevis

Adv. Donat.	*Against the Donatists*

Origen

Cels.	*Contra Celsum*
Or.	*De oratione* (*Peri proseuchēs*)
Sel. Ezech.	*Selecta in Ezechielem*

Ovid

Fast.	*Fasti*
Trist.	*Tristia*

Paulinus of Milan

Vit. Ambr.	*Vita Ambrosii*

Paulinus of Nola

Car.	*Carmina*
Ep.	*Epistolae*

Pausanias

Descr.	*Graeciae descriptio*

Petronius

Sat.	*Satyricon*

Philo

Contempl.	*De vita contemplativa*

Pindar

Olymp.	*Olympionikai*

Plato

Crat.	*Cratylus*
Leg.	*Leges*
Resp.	*Res publica*
Theat.	*Theaetetus*

Plautus

Rud.	*Rudens*

Pliny

Hist. Nat.	*Naturalis Historia*

Pliny the Younger

Ep.	*Epistulae*
Ep. Tra.	*Epistulae ad Trajanum*

Plutarch

Alex. fort.	*De Alexandri magni fortuna aut virtute*
Ant.	*Antonius*
Arist.	*Aristides*
Cupid. divit.	*De cupiditate divitiarum*
Is. Os.	*De Iside et Osiride*
Mor.	*Moralia*
Mus.	*De musica*
Num.	*Numa*
Quaest. conv.	*Quaestionum convivialum libri IX*
Quaest. rom.	*Quaestiones romanae et graecae*

Porphyry

De ant.	*De antro nympharum*

Possidius of Calama

Vit. Aug.	*Vita s. Augustinii*

Prudentius

Perist.	*Peristephanon*

Pseudo-Athanasius

Virg.	*De virginitate*

Seneca

Ben.	*De beneficiis*
Ep.	*Epistulae morales*

Siricius

Ep.	*Epistulae*

Socrates Scholasticus

Hist. Eccl.	*Historia ecclesiastica*

Sophocles

Phil.	*Philoctetes*
Trach.	*Trachiniae*

Stobaeus

Flor.	*Florilegium*

Suetonius

Aug.	*Divus Augustus*
Vesp.	*Vespasianus*

Tacitus

Hist.	*Historiae*

Tertullian

An.	*De anima*
Apol.	*Apologeticus*
Bapt.	*De baptismo*
Cor.	*De corona militis*
Haer.	*De praescriptione haereticorum*
Idol.	*De idololatria*
Jejun.	*De jejunio adversus psychicos*
Mart.	*Ad martyras*
Mon.	*De monogamia*
Or.	*De oratione*
Paen.	*De Paenitentia*
Prax.	*Adversus Praxean*
Pud.	*De Pudicitia*
Res.	*De resurrectione carnis*
Spect.	*De spectaculis*
Ux.	*Ad uxorem*
Virg.	*De virginibus velandis*

Themistius in Stobaeus

Flor.	*Florilegium*

Theodoret of Cyrrhus

Hist. eccl.	*Historia ecclesiastica*
Hist. Rel.	*Historia religiosa*

Varro

Ling.	*De lingua latina*
Rust.	*De re rustica*

Vergil

Aen.	*Aeneid*
Georg.	*Georgica*

Xenophon

Ages.	*Agesilaus*
Anab.	*Anabasis*
Eph.	*Ephesiaca*
Mem.	*Memorabilia*

Zoroastrian

Vend.	*Vendidād*

Notes on Contributors

Richard S. Ascough is Professor in the School of Religion at Queen's University in Kingston, Canada, where he teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in Religious Studies. His research focuses on the history of early Christianity and Greco-Roman religious culture with particular attention to various types of associations. He has published numerous articles and book chapters and ten books, including *Associations in the Greco-Roman World* (written with John Kloppenborg and Philip Harland, 2012) and *1 and 2 Thessalonians: Encountering the Christ Group at Thessalonike* (2014).

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PART I

RITUAL THEORY

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Ritual in the study of early Christianity

RISTO URO

Introduction

Since the first decade of the present century, an increasing number of scholars have been attracted by the use of 'ritual' as a conceptual and theoretical tool for the study of the history and cultural world of early Christianity. The roots of this growing interest can be traced back to the History of Religion School in biblical studies, the influence of social-scientific theory, especially social-cultural anthropology, and the increased openness of historians of early liturgy to ritual theory (Uro 2016: 7–22). Yet the most important reason for the growth of research on ritual in the study of early Christianity has probably been the emergence of ritual studies as a named and recognized field (Grimes 1995; 2014; Bell 1997; 2005; Post 2015; Stephenson 2015; see also Uro 2016: 23–6). The work of pioneering scholars, such as Ronald Grimes and Catherine Bell, and collective projects, such as the Heidelberg *Ritualdynamik* Research Centre (active from 2002 to 2013; see Kreinath et al. 2008b), towards the systematizing and development of knowledge and theories of ritual have been exerting an influence over many fields and disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, including the study of early Christianity. In religious studies, the cognitive movement (dubbed since the early years of the new century the 'cognitive science of religion') has advanced a number of new theories of ritual, contributing to the surge of studies on ritual in various fields dealing with religion and culture (for cognitive theories of ritual, see Xygalatas 2013: 107–23; Uro 2016: 41–70; Czachesz 2017: 88–121; see also Chapters 2, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13, 16, 18, 19, 23, 24, 27, and 35 in this volume).

The application of insights and perspectives from ritual studies may nevertheless pose a challenge to scholars of early Christianity: the study of ritual spans many areas and issues, which may not always look particularly pertinent to the kinds of questions these scholars usually ask. Thus, one key issue in the ritual analysis of early Christian history

is relevance. In addition to insights and theories from social and cultural studies, which are more familiar to students of early Christianity, the field of ritual studies draws on research carried out, for example, in experimental psychology and in various branches of the evolutionary and cognitive sciences. These areas of knowledge may seem quite remote from the study of early Christianity, and irrelevant to the textual, historical, and cultural questions that largely engage scholars in this field.

This chapter aims to provide a guide to the reader to an understanding of the nature of ritual studies as an emerging interdisciplinary field, with particular emphasis on its relevance to the study of the history of early Christianity. How can either academic theorization about ritual or empirical studies of ritual behaviour enrich and even transform the ways in which we investigate and reconstruct the early centuries of Christian history? What is the added value of the concept of 'ritual' for topics that can be and have been studied fruitfully without considering a ritual perspective? What kind of new questions do ritual approaches introduce? How can we study the rituals of ancient peoples on the basis of textual and archaeological sources, which offer insufficient or biased information about the actual practices?

Ritual Studies as a Field of Study

The academic study of ritual is rooted in the identification, by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century pioneers in anthropology and the study of religion, of the concept of 'ritual' as a special category of behaviour present in every culture (see Asad 1993: 73–87, for an insightful analysis),[1] and in the subsequent theory-formation and empirical research attached to this concept in social-cultural anthropology, sociology, comparative religion, psychology, theology, philosophy, and other fields. The emergence of 'ritual studies' as a field of its own from the late 1970s onwards is closely associated with the work of Ronald Grimes. According to Paul Post, the growing interest in ritual during the 1970s and 1980s was partly connected to the liturgical renewal movement in the wake of Vatican II—a movement in which Grimes participated as an expert (Post 2015). Grimes himself has variously described ritual studies as 'a newly consolidated field within religious studies' (Grimes 1985: 1) and 'a field of inquiry reaching across disciplinary boundaries', bringing together the interests of collaborating fields (Grimes 1987: 422). In the preface to the second edition of *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* he is somewhat more modest, defending what he calls a middle position between those who define the study of ritual as an interesting topic carried out in different disciplines and those who claim for it a status as a crucial interdisciplinary field (Grimes 1995: xix). More recently, the practitioners of ritual studies have endorsed the identity of the field as an independent

[1] For a detailed account of the background of ritual theory in the theological disputes of the Reformation and in medieval theology, see Burke (1987: 223–38); Buc (2001:161–247); Muir (2005: 163–201).

'platform for systematic academic research into ritual' (Post 2015) or as 'a distinct academic field that gives special attention to the performance aspect of the rites themselves' (Duntley 2005: 7758).[2]

Three characteristics of this newly established field can be singled out as relevant to our discussion. They also represent, to different degrees, a shift from the earlier study of ritual carried out under different disciplines. The field of ritual studies is characterized by: (1) a pluralistic approach to the definition of 'ritual'; (2) an increased interest in theory (although showing a wide spectrum of different strategies); and (3) the application of interdisciplinary perspectives on ritual.

Current ritual theorists do not usually define ritual as 'a thing out there', but rather emphasize its nature as a scholarly 'construction' or as a 'family resemblance' or 'fuzzy set' ('polythetic') concept (Snoek 2008; Sax 2010; Grimes 2014: 186–210). A pluralistic approach to the concept of ritual does not erase the identity of ritual studies, any more than differing definitions of 'religion' obscure the identity of religious studies. The key concepts of academic fields are often hard to define in precise terms: political scientists disagree as to the appropriate definition of 'politics', biologists debate as to how 'life' is to be identified, and so on—although the degree of 'fuzziness' in definitions naturally varies.

This broad range of different definitions does not mean that that definitions do not matter. At the beginning of their chapters, many of the contributors to this volume offer a working definition of ritual for the purposes of their analysis. These should not be understood as universal descriptions of a class that can be identified unequivocally if certain criteria or characteristics are met; rather, definitions are tools for analysing the phenomena under scrutiny from a ritual point of view. To be sure, some theorists criticize the very concept of ritual as a theoretical construction, seeing it as an expression of a 'particular hegemony of Western intellectual life' (Bell 1992: 6), or regarding it as 'dangerous' and 'reductionist' (Buc 2001). But we cannot dispense with definitions (see Franek 2014, for the concept of 'religion'). The post-modern criticism of definitions loses much of its force when a pluralistic approach to ritual (or, for that matter, 'religion') is adopted. Theories, including definitions, become a set of tools for interpreting phenomena that are amenable to a varying degree to ritual analysis, without strong epistemic claims necessarily being made as to the object of the study.

The issue of definition is related to the increased interest in ritual theory, i.e. in the use of theories of rituals to describe, analyse, and explain phenomena that are identified as ritual-like. Most historians of ancient religions working on ritual, or even students of ritual more generally, do not develop their own theories, but are, as Grimes puts it, 'theory-consumers' (Grimes 2014: 171). 'Theory' is a very broad concept, and theory-consumption in contemporary scholarship on ritual can mean a broad spectrum of

[2] To be sure, this identity should be described as 'soft'; there are not, to my knowledge, any academic chairs or doctoral programmes in ritual studies (see Post 2015). But an identity as a 'field' is an important factor in recognizing that ritual is a sufficiently autonomous domain of behaviour, which can be analysed from various perspectives—just as the field of musical studies investigates music in theory, history, culture, performance, and so on (Uro 2016: 25; see also Gruenwald 2003: 13–19).

scholarly styles, from the strict testing of a single theory to cherry-picking among multiple theories. Grimes' analysis of the state of the art in ritual studies sees more eclectic than focused theorizing:

> [L]et's use 'theory' in its broad contemporary sense to mean any set of generalizations, key concepts, root metaphors, and determinative vocabulary that animate the characteristic moves of one's method. Most students of ritual don't use a theory even in this loose and open sense. They rarely utilize and test a single theory, much less invent one; rather, they cherry-pick multiple theories. Searching for trenchant, supportive quotations, they cite this writer and that …, or select a school of thought (symbolic anthropology, biogenetic structuralism, or, cognitive anthropology). (Grimes 2014: 170)

The use of multiple theories, however, does not necessarily mean cherry-picking. The selection of a set of theories to be used in analysis can be well-grounded and reflective. The editors of the volume *Theorizing Rituals* contend that '[i]n modern scholarly practice of the study of ritual, one will … probably always need to refer to more than one theory' (Kreinath et al. 2008a: xxiii). By this claim they mean that there is a difference between the age of 'grand theories', i.e. all-inclusive and broad-sweeping theories of ritual, and more recent approaches, which only seek to provide partial explanations for phenomena that can be identified as rituals. Kreinath et al. do not give an example of what they regard as 'grand theories', but one might think of approaches advanced by the 'big names' in the field in the latter half of the last century, such as Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner, and Roy Rappaport. I take Kreinath and colleagues' statement not as arguing that grand theories are obsolete—if that were so, their work in collecting and systematizing the theoretical discussions of past generations would have been pointless—but as proposing that theoretical pluralism can be a helpful strategy when the topic of research is defined by a 'fuzzy set' concept, such as ritual. For a humanities scholar, it is seldom satisfactory to limit oneself to testing or applying only one specific theory for the kinds of materials he or she is investigating. This may be particularly true of the historian of early Christianity, whose sources provide only glimpses of past practices and do not always allow rigorous testing of a single theory (for theoretical pluralism in the study of early Christian rituals, see Uro 2016: 62–4).

Interdisciplinarity is a key feature of ritual studies. Ritual theorists increasingly work across disciplinary boundaries and draw on knowledge and research from more than one disciplinary tradition. Before the emergence of ritual studies as a field of its own, ritual was studied and theorized under a number of different disciplines, including anthropology, comparative religion, psychology, and biology. Interdisciplinary activities became increasingly popular in academic settings in the latter half of the twentieth century, challenging the earlier structure of knowledge as domains of disciplinary specialization (Klein 2017). 'Interdisciplinarity', along with the related terms 'multidisciplinarity' and 'transdisciplinarity', refer to a wide arrangement of coordinating, contextualizing, and integrative activities in the sciences and humanities.

Interdisciplinarity is often distinguished from multidisciplinary curricula and research activities, in which different disciplines are juxtaposed but remain separate and maintain their original identity. Many conferences, anthologies, and research projects advertising themselves as 'interdisciplinary' are in fact multidisciplinary, in the sense that they 'combine separate disciplinary approaches without proactively integrating them around a designed theme, question, or problem' (Klein 2017). Interdisciplinarity, in contrast, entails a stronger integration of the contributing fields in methodology, terminology, procedures, theory formation, and so on.

Another distinction can be made using the metaphors of bridge-building and restructuring (Group for Research and Innovation 1975; Klein 2017). In the former, the collaboration occurs between established disciplines, while in the latter elements from several disciplines are detached to form a new coherent whole. The emergence of ritual studies is an example of a restructuring process, in which research and education activities are built up around a problem area or topic and studied by using resources from several fields and disciplines (compare, for example, criminology). Yet the field of ritual studies is far from having attained the status of an established discipline, and is still mostly practised under the aegis of established disciplines and departments (religious studies, social-cultural anthropology, theology, performance studies, etc.). The inclination towards restructuring and genuine interdisciplinarity should nevertheless be borne in mind when ritual studies approaches are applied to the ancient world.

The 'bridge-building' metaphor is particularly appropriate in describing the role of ritual studies as an integrative field across the great divide between the sciences and the humanities, between 'the two cultures', to use C. P. Snow's well-known phrase (Snow 1993). Drawing on insights and research from psychology, cognitive science, and biology (ethology) as well as from religious studies, social anthropology, performance studies, and so on, ritual studies as a field is an example of a growing interest among humanities scholars in models that advance collaboration and integration between the sciences and the humanities. Edward Slingerland and Mark Collard have advocated a new 'consilience' approach (cf. Wilson 1998), intended to create a 'shared framework for the sciences and humanities' (Slingerland and Collard 2012: 3–4). While not all ritual scholars are convinced of the value of science–humanities integration, the field as a whole provides an effective framework for the interplay between cultural approaches and scientific models of explanation (see also Stephenson's discussion in Chapter 2 in this volume). This Handbook reflects the current status of ritual studies, embracing both analyses that promote integrative approaches and ones that are 'heavily rooted in cultural explanation' (see Bell 2005: 7849).

Studying Ancient Rituals

Historical research into ritual can be seen as one form of ritual studies (Post 2015: 16). Like any historian interested in past rituals, the scholar of early Christianity faces the

challenge posed by the scarcity and haphazard nature of the sources and by the fact that we can observe only textual (or archaeological) representations of ritual behaviour, not actual rites. A quick answer to this is that the same challenge concerns all historical phenomena, not just those topics that can be categorized as rituals (Muir 2005: 8). We cannot directly observe any event or phenomenon in the distant past. But there is a little more to the issue than that.

Perhaps the most passionate criticism against using ritual theory in the study of the distant past has been expressed by the medievalist Philippe Buc, in his *The Dangers of Ritual* (Buc 2001). For Buc, the concept of ritual is 'reductionist, too-often vague' and 'essentially alien' to the medieval world. Throughout his work, Buc places ritual in implicit quotation marks, so as to suggest that there are other terms, concepts, or modes of interpretation that are better fitted to the materials he is investigating (2001: 1–2). The book is divided into two parts. In Part I, Buc presents case studies of texts by writers from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages in order to explicate 'the medieval native's anthropology', as opposed to that of the twentieth-century social scientist (2001: 3). In Part II, he attempts to trace the intellectual history of the social sciences since the French Revolution, arguing that 'ritual is the multilayered product of a *longue-dureé* diachronic stratification' (2001: 2), carrying within itself a detrimental 'baggage' that ultimately invalidates its use as an instrument of historical analysis.

Buc's argument that one should focus on emic (native) accounts of cultural phenomena, not on etic ones (an outsider's perspective), has often been voiced in cultural studies in the past few decades. This sentiment has been popular among anthropologists and scholars of religion, and has resulted in detailed ethnographies in which a particular cultural trait is examined on its own terms in those societies where it is found. Yet the thesis that 'one should master a culture's grammar, but not think thoughts none of its members ever thought' (Buc 2001: 226–7) is untenable for a number of reasons. Despite the fact that many recent approaches emphasize reflexivity, subjectivity, and particularity, it is generally recognized that both emic and etic approaches are needed in the study of religion and culture. As I. M. Lewis noted in a response to the critics of his *Ecstatic Religion: An Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism* (1971), 'how else can we understand "other cultures" except comparatively in terms of our own concepts, constructs and language?' (Lewis 1989: 14; cited also in Boddy 1994: 408). The rejection of the concept of ritual or any other etic concept in the study of the past would in effect lead to rejecting comparativism as a basic method of inquiry. This is not desirable or even possible, as succinctly put by William Paden:

> While comparativism in the study of religion for many has become associated with the sins of the discipline—colonialism, essentialism, theologism, and anti-contextualism—it simply remains that there is *no* study of religion without cross-cultural categories, analysis, and perspective. Knowledge in any field advances by finding connections between the specific and the generic, and one cannot even carry out ethnographic or historical work without utilizing transcontextual concepts. Like it or not, we attend the world not in terms of objects but in terms of categories.

> Wherever there is a theory, wherever there is a concept, there is a comparative program. (Paden 2000: 182, italics original)

Paden's statement is a powerful rebuttal of the (post-modern) aversion to transcontextual or cross-cultural concepts. 'Ritual' and other concepts relevant to the study of ritual, such as 'performance', 'magic', 'purification', 'sacrifice', 'pilgrimage', 'divination', 'ritual healing', 'initiation', 'rite of passage', and others used in this volume are heuristic tools that facilitate the historian's efforts to understand ancient cultures and people. The field of ritual studies provides a framework for discussing the advantages and disadvantages of these and other (possibly better) concepts and the theories attached to them. Discarding 'ritual' as an analytical tool merely prompts the question of what should replace it; contrary to his initial promise, Buc's study does not offer an answer to that question.

However, Buc's tracing of the intellectual trajectory of 'ritual' from medieval theology to twentieth-century social science is an important contribution to the discussion. His insightful analysis highlights the importance of understanding the historical roots of the intellectual ancestors on whose shoulders ritual theorists have built their current work (see also Burke 1987; Muir 2005). The value of Buc's genealogy is not intrinsically connected to his nihilistic attitude towards ritual theory and social-scientific approaches to historiography.[3] The target of his criticism seems to be a certain kind of functionalism, rather than more recent anthropological theorizing (Walsham 2003), let alone cognitive theories of ritual.

Textuality should not be seen as an obstacle that invalidates or severely limits a ritual approach to the ancient world. It is of course true that texts do not offer a direct window onto the actual rites reflected in sources. Present-day scholars of early Christian rituals seldom display such naivety in their analyses of sources. In the course of a long history, biblical and early Christian scholars have developed a refined set of source-critical methods, which are normally integrated with or assumed in the study of early Christian rituals (for the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' in liturgical studies, see Bradshaw 2002: 14–20). Moreover, the relationship between text and ritual is an important question in itself, and explorations of the issue by ritual theorists provide self-evident resources for the examination of early Christian texts (see especially Petersen, Chapter 21 in this volume). There are a number of ways in which rites and texts can be interwoven (Strecker 1999: 78–80; DeMaris 2008: 5–6). Texts not only describe, reflect, or offer authoritative—or authoritative-sounding—instructions about rituals; they can also become ritual instruments or objects in themselves. The public reading or chanting of texts among early Christians often took place in ritual contexts (Uro 2013a). Writing down a text, for example, a divine name or formula, can itself be analysed as a ritual or magical act, heightening the efficacy of a ritual (Levy 2012). Or conversely, the rhetorical

[3] Many of the points made by Buc are in fact similar to those advocated by Catherine Bell in her work on ritual. Thus, Buc is siding with the post-modern and culturalist camp within ritual studies. For Buc's positive comment on Bell, see Buc (2001: 248).

persuasiveness of a text may be heightened by evoking ritual experiences among the addressees (see Petersen, Chapter 21 in this volume).

Rather than focusing on the limitations imposed by textual (or archaeological) representations on a ritual approach to early Christianity, the emphasis should be on the ways in which the field of ritual studies enriches the historical and textual analysis of early Christian materials.

Early Christianity through the Lens of Ritual

The benefits of ritual theory for the study of early Christianity have been demonstrated in a number of recent studies (for book-length studies, see DeMaris 2008; Taussig 2009; Lamoreaux 2013; Turley 2015; Uro 2016; Blidstein 2017; DeMaris et al. 2018). As the conclusion to this chapter, I want to focus on just a few points, which in my judgement describe the promises of the new approach and highlight the rationale and structure of this volume.

Advocates of ritual theory have noted the neglect of ritual in mainline scholarship on Christian beginnings (DeMaris 2008: 1–5; Uro 2016: 7–8). In particular, if early Christianity is approached from the perspective of history and religion, ritual ought to have its place in the story of Christian origins. Myth (or belief)[4] and ritual have long been considered to constitute the key elements of religion (or, more accurately, what is constructed as religion), and any analysis focusing on early Christianity merely as a myth or a system of beliefs would thus be deficient. One way of putting this is to argue that religions evolve as 'packages', consisting of beliefs and rituals (Henrich 2009; see also Pyysiäinen 2011). As belief-ritual packages, religious traditions are combinations in which both aspects interact and influence one another; hence the debate as to whether one of these should be preferred over the other as the heart of religion is pointless (cf. Segal 2009: 66). It is difficult to imagine any culture of shared beliefs without its knowledge being sustained by ritual practices (Uro 2016: 154). On the other hand, religious beliefs seem to support the efficient functioning of rituals (Sosis 2006; see also Bulbulia, Chapter 6 in this volume).

Thus, one promise of ritual theory is that it helps create a more complete picture of early Christian history. To explain the rise of the movement, its practices and institutions, the spread of Christian beliefs, and so on, without considering the role of ritual is to dispense with a fundamental social force in the formation of religious movements.

There are a number of trends in early Christian studies that support the closer integration of ritual theory into the field. Since the 1970s, many early Christian scholars

[4] 'Myth' is of course not synonymous with 'belief', but myth is often understood to imply some form of belief (Stringer 2008: 40), and belief and ritual occur as dichotomies similar to myth and ritual.

have been interested in social history and social realia, and have criticized approaches in which early Christianity is understood as the history of ideas, or—even more narrowly—as the history of doctrines (Meeks 2005: 165). Today, the study of social realia in the early Christian world is often understood in a framework of elite versus popular religiosities (MacMullen 2009; see also Uro 2013b: 184–7), of gendered approaches (Osiek and MacDonald 2006), or in terms of 'everyday religion' or 'lived religion' (Raja and Rübke 2015; Raja, Chapter 8 in this volume). Ritual theory accords with and enriches all these approaches, and offers a corrective to a biased understanding of early Christianity as a *system* of beliefs and practices; such an understanding ignores most people's day-to-day religious experience, or in Martin Stringer's phrase, their interaction with the 'non-empirical other' (Stringer 2008).

Embodiment, often referred to by early Christian scholars, is a concept of particular relevance for the discussion of how early Christian studies can be advanced by ritual approaches. Theorizing about the human body, in both its social and its biological dimensions, is fundamental to the study of ritual (see Zuesse 2005; DeMaris 2018: 5). Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, for example, with its emphasis on the importance of the body and bodily experiences in the social world, has been highly influential and has inspired a host of studies on early Christian social and cultural life, often with important implications for the study of ritual (e.g. Stowers 1995; 2011; Ullucci, Chapter 16 in this volume). Catherine Bell has applied and developed Bourdieu's theory of practice in the context of ritual theory. A key concept for Bell is the 'ritualized body', i.e. 'a body invested with a "sense" of ritual'. Such bodies are produced by the process of ritualization 'through the interaction of the body with a structuring and structured environment' (Bell 1992: 98). A promising avenue for enhancing our understanding of the interaction of the body with its environment is the embodied cognition approach, introduced in this volume by Eva Kundtová Klocová and Armin Geertz (Chapter 5). Relying on the growing empirical evidence for the interplay of human cognition with the body and its environment, they argue for the '4E approach', i.e. the position that cognition is embodied, embedded, extended, and enactive. The profound reliance on experimental and empirical research by these writers, as also by several other authors in this volume (see, e.g. Chapters 6, 7, 11, 13, 15, 16, 24, 27) would seem to contrast with the approaches articulated by Bell and others, 'rooted in cultural explanation' (Bell 2005: 7849), yet the very idea of the cultural embeddedness of human cognition runs against such an opposition.[5]

[5] In a concluding chapter of the recent edited volume *Early Christian Ritual Life*, Hal Taussig emphasizes the 'significant contrast' between the approach applied in that volume and my socio-cognitive approach in *Ritual and Christian Beginnings* (as well of others' using cognitive science in the study of early Christianity), their approach representing less 'full blown ideology' and 'universalistic hubris' (Taussig 2018: 185). I contend, however, that the approaches applied in *Early Christian Ritual Life* and in *Ritual and Christian Beginnings* are complementary, not mutually exclusive, and the growing field of embodied cognition could be one of those approaches that creates a common ground for integrating cultural and cognitive approaches (see also Uro 2016: 159).

Finally, the application of a ritual perspective to the study of early Christianity creates a platform for interdisciplinary collaboration and integrative approaches, both of which stimulate new questions and enrich old ones. In this volume, interdisciplinary collaboration is particularly visible in Part I, in which many authors do not come from the field of early Christian studies, but are religious studies scholars and ritual theorists. This Part raises some of the most fundamental themes and perspectives in recent theoretical work in the field of ritual studies. Some themes are ultimately rooted in classic attempts to explain religion and ritual (cf. 'identity and emotion', Davies, Chapter 4, and 'cooperation', Bulbulia, Chapter 6), others are more recent themes in ritual theory, such as 'ritualization' (Stephenson, Chapter 2), 'performance, practice, and action' (Stephenson, Chapter 3), 'embodiment' (Kundtová Klocová and Geertz, Chapter 5) and 'transmission' (Czachesz, Chapter 7). The chapters in Part I are theoretical, although the authors also give examples of ways in which the theories and approaches they introduce can shed light on early Christian and other ancient practices.

Part II deals with what can be called 'mid-level theoretical themes' and 'ritual frames' in the socio-cultural world of early Christianity. There is no clear-cut line between these two terms. *Mid-level themes* here refers to such topics as 'magic' (Czachesz, Chapter 11), 'purification' (Kazen, Chapter 13), 'sacrifice' (Ullucci, Chapter 16), 'pilgrimage' (Feldt, Chapter 17), 'initiation' (Martin, Chapter 19), and 'mortuary rituals' (Gudme, Chapter 20), all of which have been intensively theorized in ritual studies. *Ritual frame* can refer to various things; I follow Stephenson's use of the term and take it to refer to times, spaces, cultural domains, performances, objects, etc., which govern or guide our understanding of actions as rituals (Stephenson 2010: 46–9, referring to Goffman 1974). Ancient sanctuaries (Raja, Chapter 8), associations (Kloppenborg, Chapter 9), household and family (Dolansky, Chapter 10), communal meals (Ascough, Chapter 12), prayer (Aune, Chapter 14), music (Weimer, Chapter 15), divination (Nissinen, Chapter 18), and textuality (Petersen, Chapter 21) can be analysed as ritual frames, which structure and invoke certain ritual actions as well as set up interpretative frameworks for them. These topics can be and have been studied without reference to ritual, but analyses from a ritual perspective allow us to harness the rich and mostly neglected resources of ritual studies in relation to them. Thus, for example, divination in the ancient Mediterranean world has been studied as a topic in its own right. Ritual theory, however, is helpful because it is difficult to explain 'the way ritual works … without reference to its ritual aspect' (Nissinen, Chapter 18). Music clearly does not coincide with the concept of ritual; yet, there is considerable overlap between the two domains referred to by these concepts (Weimer, Chapter 15). Communal meals in Roman antiquity offer a valuable case study for analysing how ritual functions to both create social bonding and works to enact the extant hierarchical stratifications (Ascough, Chapter 12).

Parts III and IV, in turn, focus on specifically Christian ritual practices from the beginning of the movement up to the fifth century. Many of the topics discussed in these sections are familiar from histories of early Christian liturgy, but here they embedded

in and informed by the ritual studies framework of the Handbook. For example, the baptism practices of early Christians are situated in a larger context, as part of the ritual use of water in the ancient Mediterranean world (DeMaris, Chapter 22), or considered in the light of modern theorizing about rites of passage (Bradshaw, Chapter 30). Furthermore, ritual theory can contribute to 'bridging gaps' in the history of early Christian meal practices by providing concepts and findings from the behavioural, cognitive, and social sciences, and helping the scholar to evaluate 'what is more and less likely' (Kaše, Chapter 23) as well as dealing with the 'gap between historical liturgy and present practice' (Larson-Miller, Chapter 31, in relation to the study of eucharistic developments from the second century to the fifth century). The chapters in Part IV, more specifically, demonstrate ways in which the history of early liturgy can benefit by drawing on ritual studies and related approaches. These include Bourdieu's theory of practice (Phillips, Chapter 33, on prayer; Hunter, Chapter 36, on weddings); the 'ritual gaze' (Jensen, Chapter 34, on early Christian art); embodied experience (Harkins and Dunkle, Chapter 35, on hymns and psalmody; Finn, Chapter 38, on fasting); gendered approaches to ritual (Day, Chapter 37, on women's ritual); everyday religiosity (Eastman, Chapter 39, on relic veneration and pilgrimage). Yet other perspectives involve the theorizing of ritual's relation to time (Day, Chapter 32) and space (Latham, Chapter 40, on the Christianization of the urban space).

The application of ritual theory, understood in a broad sense, has not merely redefined old topics and perspectives, but has also stimulated entirely new ones. The chapters in Part III investigate, for example, ways in which game theory and signalling theory can shed light on rituals of reintegration in the early church (Roitto, Chapter 24), how the anthropological debate over ritual healing can increase our understanding of early Christian healing practices (Theissen, Chapter 25), and how the 'physiological and neurological capacity of ritual' informs reports of ritual experience, ecstasy, and spirit possession in early Christian sources (Shantz, Chapter 27). Ritual theory also allows us to take a fresh approach to sacrificial practices and language in earliest Christianity, illuminating both ritual changes and some of the most fundamental theological concepts (Eberhart, Chapter 26). Previous scholarship has also by and large overlooked the role played by ritual in the emergence of the church hierarchy (Hylen, Chapter 27) and in the rise of orthodoxy (Perkins, Chapter 28).

In sum, the present volume seeks to promote interdisciplinary collaboration, drawing on the newly established field of ritual studies to better explain and understand the history and culture of early Christianity.

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CHAPTER 2

RITUALIZATION AND RITUAL INVENTION

BARRY STEPHENSON

Ritualization in Ethology

In 1914, Julian Huxley published a paper on the courtship habits of the Great Crested Grebe, a common species of water fowl. Huxley, drawing on scattered suggestions in early works in ornithology and evolutionary biology, introduced a new theoretical construct, the concept of 'ritualization', which he continued to refine over many decades:

> Ritualization may be defined ethologically as the adaptive formalization or canalization of emotionally-motivated behaviour, under the … pressure of natural selection so as (a) to promote better and more unambiguous signal function, both intra- and inter-specifically; (b) to serve as more efficient stimulators or releasers of more efficient patterns of action in other individuals; (c) to reduce intra-specific danger; and (d) to serve as sexual or social bonding mechanisms. (Huxley 1966: 250)

Building on Huxley's initial formulation, evolutionary biologists, behavioural psychologists, and cognitive scientists have deployed the notion of ritualization (1) to argue animals engage in ritual (or, at the very least, proto-ritual) and (2) to explain and interpret human ritual within an evolutionary framework.

Instrumental and Communicative Behaviour

Huxley distinguishes between instrumental and communicative behaviour. In the former case, an organism directly and physically modifies or interacts with its environment; a bird, to take Huxley's classic example, builds a nest. In communicative behaviour, in contrast, an organism is not directly acting but rather relationally

communicating with other organisms in their surroundings. As an evolutionary biologist, Huxley was endeavouring to explain anatomical features (the plumage of a male peacock) and behavioural repertories (bucks clashing in a forest) that struck observers as being somehow ritual-like, that is, conspicuous, stereotyped, repetitive, rhythmic, and determined. *Ritualization* is the term Huxley chooses to describe a process, governed by natural selection, in which certain patterns of behaviours lose their original (physical) instrumentality to become purely symbolic ceremonies, transmitting information that enhances species survival. In this framework, ritualized behaviour is communicative behaviour serving the interests of species survival, but how so?

Canalizing 'Emotionally Motivated Behaviour'

In ethology, ritualized behaviour may not be instrumental, but it is certainly functional, in so far as it improves the clarity, in the common interest of multiple parties, of the emotional state informing (or encoded or embodied in) the signal being shared. An example will help clarify Huxley's notion of 'canalizing emotion'. If escape in the face of a threat or an attack from a conspecific is not possible, virtually all ground-dwelling vertebrates will demonstrate a form of submissiveness that typically involves making oneself smaller, cowering to the ground, and assuming a vulnerable posture. A chimpanzee, faced with the presence of an aggressor, will turn and crouch down, to signal the situation is non-threatening, an act that de-escalates the danger inherent in an encounter charged with heightened emotion. Such behaviour is accompanied by a 'smile', a facial repertoire in which the teeth are displayed but, rather than being open, they are pressed together to signal the absence of threat. Chimpanzees did not learn such behaviour, and the concept of ritualization is introduced to explain the origins and development of this repertoire of submissive posturing. Alongside flight, or being overwhelmed by fear, or fighting back, each of which likely triggers a heightening of emotion and aggression and hence danger, evolutionary processes produce a composed, ordered behavioural response in the service of adaptive fitness. Ritualization, for Huxley, involves the 'gradual change of a useful action into a symbol and then into a ritual . . . the change by which the same act which first subserved a definite purpose directly comes later to subserve it only indirectly (symbolically) and then not at all' (1914: 506).

Chimpanzees can instrumentally crouch down to pick something up; over time, crouching is not merely potentially instrumental but becomes a symbol of the absence of threatening 'intentions'; over a longer time, the gesture becomes increasingly formalized and accompanied, amplified, and clarified by facial and hand gestures—a 'smile' and 'open hand'—reducing ambiguity in the gesture. This evolutionary process eventuates in what may be called a 'rite (or ritual) of submission'. Ethological theory emphasizes the role of ritualization in smoothing or quelling the potential for conflict or anxiety in moments of heightened emotion, most typically associated with sexual reproduction, protecting territory, establishing social hierarchies, and defending against or engaging in aggressive, threatening behaviour.

From Human Ethology to an Ethology of Religion?

In 1966, Huxley published the papers from the ground-breaking symposium, 'A Discussion on Ritualization of Behaviour in Animals and Man', with contributions by luminaries the likes of Konrad Lorenz, Erik Erikson, Edmund Leach, and E. H. Gombrich, opening the door wide for an ethological approach to the rites and ceremonies of human cultures. Building on such work, Konrad Lorenz (1903–1989), Niko Tinbergen (1907–1988), and Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1928–) developed through the 1970s the field of human ethology, the biology of human behaviour. Compiling a vast array of ritualized behaviours, such as stimulus-response mechanisms in newborns, facial expressions, appeasing gestures, sexual identity and pair formation, and the socialization of aggressive behaviour, the work done in human ethology has clearly demonstrated a biological basis informing, even determining, the behaviour of *homo sapiens sapiens*. Charles Darwin had earlier recognized the universality of the human smile across cultures, and ethologists will point to the fact that the non-sighted from birth will smile in the same situations as the sighted, a clear indication of a deeply engrained behavioural pattern. The 'fear grin' of the chimpanzee and the human smile are evolutionary kin.

In potentially threatening situations, human beings exhibit submissive or appeasing behaviours not unlike that of the chimpanzee, though with greater variety, including 'letting the shoulders hang, lowering the head, avoiding physical contact, and extending the hand', as well as the use of 'high acoustic frequencies'; smaller organisms have a smaller vocal box, which naturally produces higher frequencies, so the use of such high frequencies is a way of symbolically making oneself smaller (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1989: 501, 534). Human beings are, after all, animals; if much animal behaviour is the result of ritualization, then so too is ours. Can this line of reasoning be extended from genetically determined or informed behaviour to the rites and ceremonies of human culture? Is prayer, for example, explainable in terms of natural selection?

From the evolutionary perspective, ritualized behaviour in human beings (which is typical of but not limited to what most people refer to as ritual) can be understood to serve similar functions (enhancing species survival) as does ritualization in the animal world. If it is true, for example, that not a few religious rites are informed by what we may call submissive posturing (sometimes towards a dominant fellow human, but also towards the divine, deities, the sacred), is this empirical fact best explained by arguing that neurobiological necessity governs postures of petitionary prayer, and that prayer is best understood as a by-product of ritualization, adaptation, environmental fitness, and natural selection? This is indeed the argument developed by Jay Feierman, though he presents a very qualified conclusion:

> Some of the major components which make up religion could have come into being by the evolutionary process of natural selection and … some of the structural design features embedded within religion's major components could be phylogenetic and cultural adaptations as well as have adaptiveness. However, 'could have' and 'could be' are not the same as 'did'. (Feierman 2009: 64)

Though Feierman's discussion is enticing, it largely consists of reasoning by analogy, and is qualified by numerous 'could haves'. The fact is, we know very little about the phylogenetic history of ritualization in hominids and much of the work in this area is highly speculative.

Cognitive Science of Religion

The ethological turn in thinking about ritual and religion, one that places the study of religion firmly in an evolutionary framework, offers enormous possibilities for rethinking religion, as significant in its impact on the humanities and social sciences as Durkheim's social analysis or Saussure's linguistic analysis. The cognitive science of religion is an interdisciplinary field, drawing on the foundational work in ethology, but adding insights from evolutionary anthropology and neurobiology. The field is complex and tackles a great variety of questions and topics, including a theory of ritualization, to which we must limit ourselves here.

Boyer and Liénard (2006) develop the notion of a Hazard-Precaution System to explain the presence of ritualized behaviour in childhood development, in pathological behaviour (especially compulsive disorders), and in 'cultural rituals'. Here, such behaviour in humans is understood as a means of detecting and responding to 'inferred threats' (in contrast to manifestly present threats) in one's environment. Ritualized behaviour (which is found in but not limited to ritual) is explained as a response to 'fitness-related problems' or 'threats to fitness', a perspective that conceives ritual as a by-product of evolution, and thus characterized by automatism; the intentions or meaningful experiences of ritual actors or agents are relatively unimportant in explaining the neurobiological workings of ritual. To simplify greatly, in focusing on 'inferred threats', Boyer, Liénard, and others extend Huxley's original insight to ritualization in humans, connecting conspicuous ritualized behaviour to the modulation and control of internal emotional and cognitive states such as fear, aggression, anxiety, and confusion (Boyer and Liénard 2006). In cognitive approaches to religion, there exists a plurality of interpretations and explanations, including considerable debate about whether ritual is a by-product of evolution or a functionally adaptive behaviour; nevertheless, a broadly shared perspective is that human ritual plays a role in solving 'evolutionary and cultural problems, including bonding and cooperation, commitment to group values, and transmission of normative and cultural information' (Kapitány and Nielsen 2016: 27).

Beyond advancing a functional theory of ritualized behaviour, one of the achievements of the cognitive science of religion is the use of the concept of ritualization in formulating a compelling explanation of how ritual works. The cognitive approach largely sets aside questions of social context, intersubjective and publicly contested meanings, and historical development, zeroing in on the unique features of ritual, more specifically, of ritualized behaviour, in order to develop an explanation of the inner workings of rites and ceremonies. The 'last supper' is a meal, yes, but its narrative context and the

early ritualization of sharing bread and wine have general features of ritualized behaviour, namely 'opacity' and 'goal demotion'. We eat to survive, but a Eucharist 'meal' is not about caloric intake. In communion, the everyday acts of eating and drinking are elevated, formalized, and stylized. In the process, they are transformed from simple *behaviours* to *gestures*, and these gestures are strange and compelling precisely because they are not what they seem—they are not ordinary behaviours with clear causal functions. In the Eucharist, eating and drinking are marked as goal-demoted and opaque—their purpose (at the neurobiological level) is not entirely clear, we cannot infer the meaning or function or causality of the gestures based on innate, inherited, cognitive experience and know-how. Indeed, as the Eucharist tradition develops, communion as an actual meal recedes in importance; the sharing of bread and wine undergoes increased goal demotion. Huxley's insight can be directly applied here: in the communal meal tradition, we see a gradual change of a useful action (eating) into a symbol ('this is my body') and then into a ritual (a liturgy).

One result of creating goal-demoted action is that the action itself becomes particularized, drawing attention to itself precisely because it does not perform its expected, normal, or everyday functions. In many rites, people wash when they are already clean, for example. Though washing before prayer may be socially normative, the opaque and goal-demoted nature of cleansing as a ritual gesture disrupts deep-seated neurobiological predictions or expectations surrounding such a behaviour, thereby creating both a heightened interest in the gesture (relative to more transparent actions) along with a cognitive dissonance or discord that clamours for resolution. Encountering ritualized gestures, acts, and utterances, 'we are motivated to return to the default level of interpretation … [and] we attempt to attribute and infer meaning' to regain a stable cognitive state (Kapitány and Nielsen 2016: 29). These meanings are normatively supplied by cultural traditions. Ritualization prepares a table, so to speak, on which a culture can present and consume its symbolic meals.

Meaning, it seems, is as necessary to humans as food, security, and shelter; ritual (alongside other 'bracketing' activities, such as play or art, which are also characterized by opacity and goal-demotion) is a vehicle for making such meanings, though in an indirect sense. A number of theorists advance the idea that the acts that constitute ritual are 'meaninglessness', in the sense that there are no clear empirical goals nor reasonable causal mechanisms attached to them (Boyer and Liénard 2006b: 816). Rites are meaningless, and it is this very lack of meaning that creates the conditions for seeding or instantiating meanings.

One of the more vocal proponents of ritual's 'meaninglessness' is the Indologist Frits Staal, who inaugurated this line of thinking in numerous works through the 1980s (Staal 1989). Noting that ritualization precedes the emergence of *homo sapiens* (that is, ritualization comes before matters of mind, meaning, belief, and value) and that it is a culture's ritual systems, not the meaning ascribed to these systems, that persist across long periods of time, Staal proposes a causal sequence: ritual is biologically produced and then seeks out meanings: 'meaningless things survive … [because] they are looking for meaning, nay, they demand to be provided with meaning. Rites and mantras suck

up meanings that come up their way like black holes suck up matter' (Staal 1991: 233). The idea that human ritual is 'meaningless'—or, less harshly put, perhaps, marked by 'non-intentionality'—is variously advanced by diverse theorists such as Staal, Roy Rappaport, James Laidlaw and Caroline Humphrey, and Liénard and Boyer. This view is by no means shared by all, including the pioneers in the cognitive science of religion, E. Thomas Lawson and Robert N. McCauley, who, in *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture* take Staal's radical rejection of a semantics of ritual to task, arguing that even self-reflexive systems generally have semantic content. Moreover, they rightly note, theories of ritual's meaninglessness have difficulty accounting for ritual change; though 'ritual is a more conservative institution and more slow to change. . . . it clearly is not a static one' (Lawson and McCauley 1990: 168).

Assets and Liabilities of the Ethological-Cognitive Approach

What are the merits and limits of the concept of ritualization inaugurated by Huxley and developed in the ethological-cognitive approach to religion? How does it help us to understand early Christian ritual? The biological and cognitive basis of theorizing ethologically does put pause to the pervasive culturalism informing the humanities and social sciences. Culturalism claims that culture is what goes all the way down; evolutionary biology reminds that culture is necessarily built on the body. We like to think of ourselves as free and autonomous, but biology is more involved in our behaviours than we may care to admit. Ethology situates cultural rites in relation to deeply engrained behavioural repertoires. Knowing more about these repertories can shed new light on rites and ritualized action in early Christianity. When Jesus, faced with a mob intent on stoning an adulterous woman, 'bends down' to write in the sand (John 8:6–8), or when he advises 'if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also' (Matt. 5:39), one might argue that at work is an intuitive understanding of the role of submissive posturing in de-escalating conflictual situations. The approach also offers an intriguing explanation of how the goal-demoted and opaque nature of ritual—its 'meaninglessness'—works to create cognitive states primed to receive normative, doctrinal beliefs and values. Scholars of early Christianity could work to compile a set of such goal-demoted, opaque actions and gestures in order better to understand their use as the building blocks of doctrinal and confessional traditions.

Most theorists in this area acknowledge the limits of the approach. Liénard and Boyer note that 'debating whether animal and typically human rituals are continuous or not may not be the most fruitful strategy' (2006: 818) and 'there may be lots of different reasons why particular kinds of ceremonies are found in human cultures, why they persist, and why they are relatively stable' (2006: 597). Most theorists are careful to distinguish between ritualized behaviour and rites (or rituals). 'Rituals', it is acknowledged,

'may not be causally opaque or goal demoted …, typically have a great deal of history and exegetical justification …, and may involve instrumental outcomes' (Kapitány and Nielsen 2016: 28). Nevertheless, the claims for ritualized behaviour tend to extend to a generalized conception of cultural rituals. The idea that ritual, for example, is a response to threat, change, and disequilibrium is quite common in ritual theory outside of the fields of ethology and cognitive science. Ronald Grimes, summarizing rites of passage theory in the tradition of Arnold van Gennep, describes 'a rite of passage [as] a set of symbol-laden actions by means of which one passes through a dangerous zone, negotiating it safely and memorably' (Grimes 1999: 6). Similarly, the anthropologist Michael Jackson describes his work as a phenomenology of Victor Turner's idea of liminality, examining 'the various ways in which temporal, spatial, personal, and cultural in-betweenness is experienced in human life … what is important, in my view, is the unstable relationship—the *écart*, the cusp, the broken middle—between our experience of immediate and nonimmediate fields of experience' (2009: 6). Behavioural approaches speak of ritual in terms of 'security systems', while cultural approaches deploy the language of 'negotiating liminality', and there are as yet unexplored affinities in these fields.

For all its merits and intriguing explanatory potential, however, the cognitive approach has some shortcomings. It is relatively weak when it comes to understanding the situated, contested, social, and political uses of ritual. 'In our view', write Liénard and Boyer, 'features of collective rituals can be explained only if we leave aside cultural institutions for a while and turn to ritualized behavior that can be observed in diverse circumstances and with different consequences' (2006: 819). While certainly legitimate, the interest here differs greatly from work in cultural anthropology, history, and religious studies, to name but three disciplines less bent on explanation than understanding, a distinction developed by Wilhelm Dilthey in his discussion of the differences between the *Naturwissenschaften* and the *Geisteswissenschaften*. Moreover, and methodologically more significant, since collective rituals (rites) are, in fact, as much the product of cultural institutions as biological ritualizations, to simply ignore these institutions is to eliminate from consideration most of the data about those very rites.

For Liénard and Boyer, a cultural approach to ritual (by which they mean focused on symbolism, shared meanings, identities, social roles, negotiations) is inadequate, as it offers no account of 'the specific features of rigidity, scriptedness . . . repetitions, redundancy . . . [and] obviously pointless actions' characteristic of ritual (2006: 819). Culture is bracketed in the attempt to understand human nature and its workings through comparative phylogenetic analysis, examining the history of a behavioural trait and its functional usefulness across taxa. Yes, the ethological-cognitive discussion of ritualization does offer a fascinating account of how ritual works at a neurobiological level; it fails, however, to offer much in the way of an analysis, interpretation, or critique of those associated (or inhered) meanings embodied and projected by certain rites. When it comes to reflecting on, interpreting, and critiquing rites, the cognitive-ethological approach is relatively ineffectual, since the focus is primarily explanatory (How does ritual work?), eschewing hermeneutical and normative questions (What does this ritual mean?, What are the social implications of this ritual?, Whose interests are being served in this

ritual?). It is when considering this latter set of questions that the concept of 'ritualization' has been developed beyond the line of thought traceable to Huxley, the so-called school of 'practice theory', to which we will return. With the focus largely at the level of biology (or nature), there is recognition that such a methodology 'cannot be applied effectively to traits that have a recent evolutionary history and have evolved within the *Homo* lineage, such as language', that is, with respect to human cultures (Georgiev et al. 2014: 2).

Second, the ethological-cognitive approach may use the language of *action*, but what is really meant is *behaviour*, since a ritual actor's intentions, motivations, and experiences are largely ignored, in favour of theorizing the 'obvious aspects of ritual', to use anthropologist Roy Rappaport's oft-quoted phrase. The cognitive approach tends to ignore the possibility that ritual itself has a kind of agency (see Stephenson, Chapter 3 in this volume). Generally, the relationship between ritualization and interiority, meaning, intentionality has been understudied (see Cavallin 2013).

Third, highly ambitious cognitive explanations of ritual overreach themselves. Though individual theorists often have narrow definitions, the concept of ritualization has been variously used to cover everything from the behaviour of crustaceans to someone circumambulating a temple. Aside from the problem of reductionism—is the waggle dance of bees really similar to the Sun Dance of the Lakota, with each being instances of ritualization?—Huxley's initial insight has come to serve as the basis for a universal theory of everything. Contemporary systems theory and discussions of self-organizing behaviour, for example, are indebted to Huxley, with the concept of ritualization deployed to describe any 'self-organised emergence of systems capable of processing symbolic information' (Ebeling and Fesitel 2011: 365). Here, ritualization explains not merely the emergence of ritual but also language, numeracy, and even life itself.

Fourth, the notion of meaninglessness is suspect. Cognitive theorists do not generally speak of ritual's 'meaninglessness', but they do hold that there is a lack of 'normal' empirical or causal fit between ritual acts and outcomes; such a view is limited. Though certainly a range of meanings can be attributed to ritualized action—crucifixion is the execution of justice, a warning to one's enemies, the salvation of humanity, the revelation of the workings of the scapegoat mechanism, and so on—ritual action is not an entirely empty container. It would be hard to inscribe on to crucifixion the idea that it represents 'neighbour love', for example. In ritual there may be a tight braiding of ritual attitudes (those literal postures, gestures, acts assumed in a rite) and ideational, emotional attitudes. One does not submit to an aggressor by hitting them, but by submitting—submission has a particular embodied form. Embracing someone literally warms the body, hence the foundational metaphor 'affection is warmth'. It is important to emphasize that with chimpanzee behaviour, for example, 'crouching' and an 'open palm' are not merely arbitrary *symbols* of non-aggressive behaviour—they *are* non-aggressive behaviour. In the language of Paul Tillich, such gestures 'participate in that to which [they] point' (1957: 42). In spite of indebtedness to ethology, cognitive approaches to human ritualization do at times underestimate the coherence or fit between form and meaning;

symbols are not always arbitrary, a fact that is recognized in signalling theories (cf. Uro 2016: 128–53 and Bulbulia, Chapter 6 in this volume).

Finally, the cognitive perspective tends to ignore the fact that ritualized behaviour informs and moves in multiple, sometimes antithetical, directions. When a chimpanzee's genetic inheritance activates a ritualized response in the face of aggression, but it is killed nevertheless, we assume, from an evolutionary framework, that 'violence pays', that is, intra-specific violence has evolutionary adaptiveness (see Georgiev et al. 2014). When the benefits of aggression to the point of killing a conspecific outweigh the costs, killing will occur. Ritual can put the brakes on violence, but only up to a point; there are times ritualization does not do its job. The difficulty here is that the aggressor's behaviour is just as ritualized as the victim's; when chimpanzees tear the limbs from a corpse and beat it with rocks and sticks (see Preutz et al. 2017), such behaviour is as over-determined, symbolic, and non-instrumental (the victim is already dead) as submissive, appeasing ritualizations. Yet cognitive-ethological approaches tend to speak of ritualization in relation to 'good' behaviours: social bonding, regulating emotional disequilibrium, navigating precarious transitions, cooperation, 'hazard-precaution systems', and so on; of course, there are exceptions, both in the 'classical' cognitive theories of McCauley and Lawson and Harvey Whitehouse, as well as more recent signalling approaches, exemplified in the work of Richard Sosis. The point here is that the often positively valenced language of 'cooperation', 'bonding', and 'adaptiveness' may obscure the pathological, violent, and destructive potentials and outcomes of ritual action.

There are both rites of submission and rites of domination, however. Human cultures ritualize to all sorts of different ends; there are baptisms and there are crucifixions—torture, too, is ritualized action (Binder, Driver, and Stephenson 2011). Note here that, taken to its logical conclusion, the emphasis on the 'meaninglessness' of ritual means that typologies of ritual are not about the inherent nature of rites, but only about the normative, agreed-upon, shared meanings of those rites. Yet surely there is an inherent, embodied difference between ritualized torture and the ritualized sharing of food. There are rites of peace, and rites of war, and it is the *form* of these respective rites (not merely an imputed *content*) that makes them peaceable or aggressive—*doves* do not hunt and kill prey, but *hawks* do.

Ritualization, Bodily Dispositions, and Hegemonic Power

The concept of ritualization is central to Catherine Bell's influential theorizing of ritual as 'strategic practice' in relation to 'hegemonic power'. Bell shares the basic ethological view that ritualization is a means to mark a script of behaviours as 'special'. Ritualization 'is a way of acting that distinguishes itself from other ways of acting in the very way it does what it does' and 'a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish

and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian, activities' (Bell 1992: 140, 74). Another use of the concept, however, reveals Bell's critical interests: ritualization is 'a strategy for the construction of a limited and limiting power relationship' and ritualization aims at 'the production of a ritualized body' (1992: 8, 98). While cognitive science tends to emphasize ritualization as the creation of a relative empty 'space' that can be filled with meanings, Bell, drawing on Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, brackets the discussion of the meaning of rites, to examine instead the role of ritualized behaviour in cementing social power and traditional forms of authority.

Far from a blunt tool, however, ritualization involves a subtle circulation of power, and can only be understood in relation to the details of social-cultural contexts. Social power for Bell is not chiefly imposed from the top down, but from the bottom up, and ritual plays a significant role in establishing differential and hierarchical relations, the entire scope of what Bourdieu theorized as the *habitus*. Bell's view of ritualization is firmly within the framework of a hermeneutics of suspicion. Ritual activity does allow actors a certain amount of agency in negotiating their interests and identity, but always within limits tacitly informing the ritual frame. Ritualization 'produces and objectifies constructions of power (via the schemes that organize its environment), which the social agent then reembodies. Ritualized agents do not see themselves as projecting [these] schemes'; rather, they 'misrecognize' the nature of their actions because ritual provides a false experience of 'powers or realities beyond the community and its activities, such as god or tradition …' (Bell 1992: 206). Bell terms this ritually created experience 'redemptive hegemony', meaning that the political and social power of tradition is safely ensconced, unbeknownst to ritualists, within a culture's ritualizations (1992: 85).

Bell prefers to speak of ritualization rather than ritual. In her view, symbolic analysis, by focusing on the meanings of rites as a culture's paradigmatic acts, obscures the nitty gritty of social practices. The discourse of ritual theory, she argues, has been essentializing, positing a human universal that scholars then explain, and in so doing scholars ensconce western dualisms such as thought and action. Here, ritualization is deployed as a critique not only of ritual but of ritual theory. In this view, Bell has affinities with the thought of critical theorists such as Talal Asad and Judith Butler. Asad has drawn attention to a change in conceptions of ritual in modernity, by examining the word's usage in *Encyclopedia Britannica* entries between 1771 and 1910. In the earlier entries, ritual refers, Asad informs us, to 'a book directing the order and manner to be observed in celebrating religious ceremonies'. In 1910, a significantly longer entry appears, suggesting not merely increasing knowledge about ritual due to the growth of ethnography and anthropology, but a completely different conception of ritual:

> Ritual is now regarded as a type of routine behavior that symbolizes or expresses something and, as such, relates differentially to individual consciousness and social organization. That is to say, it is no longer a script for regulating practice but a type of practice that is interpretable as standing for some further verbally definable, but tacit, event. (Asad 1993: 57)

Asad wishes to stick closer to the original meaning—rites as 'apt performances' and 'disciplinary practices' that train the body from the outside in. In his example of medieval Christian monasticism, prescriptive rites 'are directed at forming and reforming Christian dispositions' (Asad 1993: 131). For Asad, Bell, and other critical theorists, at stake here is more than the point that the meaning and use of the word 'ritual' undergo historical change. A discourse about the meaning of ritual obscures what Asad and Bell take ritualization to be truly about. No doubt we embody ideas, beliefs, values, attitudes of which we are only dimly aware, if at all. But Bell also establishes a dualism in her theorizing—ritualists 'misrecognize' what they do, they are the ones who do not know, while scholars truly know what ritual is up to. Bell rules out of court the idea that ritual practices may promote a more insightful understanding and critical awareness of bodily schemes; that ritual can only perpetuate a false consciousness is a view that also essentializes a very complex phenomenon.

Michael Philip Penn, in his analysis of the use of ritualized kissing as an identifier to mark and exclude social belonging, has applied Bell's approach in early Christian studies. No doubt this critical theory of ritualization could be extended to other early Christian rites and practices, examining how ritual serves to structure the ritualist's experience in terms of emerging dynamics and social power (Penn 2005). The Didache demonstrates, for example, that prohibitions around food were used as a way of controlling the presence and influence of itinerant 'charismatics' in local communities (Did. 11:7–9, 13:1–6).

Ritualization, Culture, and Creativity

Ritualization, writes Bell, 'is a particularly "mute" form of activity. It is designed to do what it does without bringing what it is doing across the threshold of discourse or systematic thinking' (1992: 93). If we really knew what ritual meant, suggests Bell, it would not, could not, do its work. In such a framework, the notion of ritual invention or ritual creativity has little place, and Bell's theory is perhaps not best suited to studying emerging traditions, inside of which people may well be engaging in ritual with more conscious motives and critical ends than Bell's theory allows. Similarly, ethology and cognitive science are only partially helpful in studying human ritual because human beings do not only *behave*, they also *act*, and our mix of behaviours and actions in the world are informed by both biology and culture: 'one', according to Jesus, 'does not live by bread alone' (Matt. 4:4). When cultural and historical factors are brought to the fore, cost-benefit analyses and behavioural optimization (Georgiev et al. 2014) strategies seem grossly inadequate to understanding human ritualizations and ritual traditions; in fact, some of the more fascinating ritualizations—such as the parodic procession Jesus leads into Jerusalem—are fascinating precisely because they run counter to a cost-benefit analysis, unless, of course, we introduce other kinds of 'benefits' that are not

easily situated in an ethological paradigm, but are properly cultural goods. Humans can act against their best (biological) interests, but also in the service of other kinds of (ideational or ideological or value) interests, and these latter interests are also concomitant with ritualizations that we have invented.

Culture and Invention

Ritualized behaviours, ethologically and cognitively understood, are *intrinsic*, part of our biological make-up. Cultural patterns and forms, including rites and ceremonies, are *extrinsic* sources of information, a second skin that supplements more biologically determined behaviour, a necessity given the relative lack of instinctual determination in human behaviour compared with animals. Animals do what they do, humans in part make up what they do. Models *of* something, notes Clifford Geertz, are found throughout nature; but models *for* something seem a uniquely human capacity: a smile is largely universal and genetically determined (a 'model' or 'symbol' of the absence of a threat), 'but sardonic smiling and burlesque frowning are equally surely predominantly cultural' (1973: 51). For theorists the likes of Durkheim, Geertz, and Peter Berger, religion and its secularized equivalents are 'systems of symbols' providing a kind of blueprint or orienting map without which we are lost (Geertz 1973: 91–2). We get on with life by gathering information stored not only in our physiological make-up, but in the cultural goods that surround us, in the intersubjective space of human signifying practices: maps, clothing, food, sacred objects, music, built environments, conceptions of time, and rites and performances. In ethological approaches, it is the 'meaninglessness' of ritual that is highlighted; in cultural approaches, questions of meaning are usually paramount:

> Humanity is a species that lives and can only live in terms of meanings it itself must invent. These meanings and understandings not only reflect or approximate an independently existing world but participate in its very construction. The worlds in which humans live are not fully constituted by tectonic, meteorological and organic processes. They are not only made of rocks and trees and oceans, but are also constructed out of symbolically conceived and performatively established cosmologies, institutions, rules, and values. (Rappaport 1999: 8)

For Rappaport, ritual is the chief means by which these 'worlds' are invented: morality, custom, cosmologies, the idea of the sacred—these are the 'entailments' of ritual. It is highly speculative that one kind of activity could be responsible for producing basically everything gathered under the rubric of 'culture', and the notion of 'entailments' somewhat glosses the details of the process imagined taking place, but Rappaport is surely correct that the ubiquity of ritual in the anthropological and historical record suggests that it is of central importance to the emergence and maintenance of not merely the human species, but also human cultures.

Rappaport makes little use of the concept of ritualization, other than to assume it necessarily happened at some point in our prehistory—the moment of invention—producing, over time, those existent, stable, normative rites we can observe or read about in the historical record, rites that, in a fashion like our genetic inheritance, are simply 'there'. Though acknowledging invention, Rappaport has little to say about the dynamics of ritual, on ritual change and development, and hence there is little in his theory on matters of ritual creativity, innovation, improvisation, and spontaneity. More to the point, such notions are explicitly absent from his conception of ritual as a tradition-bound, rule-governed set of actions, 'not entirely encoded by the performer' (Rappaport 1999: 24). A lot rides here on the words 'not entirely', a tacit acknowledgement that ritual actors do, at least at times, have active, intentional influence on ritual forms and meanings.

A similar notion of ritualization informs the influential work of Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw. They define 'ritualization [as] the process by which normal, everyday action is endowed with [a special] quality and becomes ritual … Ritualization begins with a particular modification of the normal intentionality of human action. Action which has undergone this modification is ritual action' (Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994: 64–71). For these theorists, *ritual* (more precisely, nameable rites) is a culturally observable phenomenon, taking place in a bounded space and time, while *ritualization* is a conceptual notion that refers to the process generating a distinction between everyday action and the specialness of ritual action. Modifying intentions and meanings is recognized as integral to ritualization, but such interests are quickly supplanted: 'We argue below that ritualization severs the link, present in everyday activity, between the "intentional meaning" of the agent and the identity of the act which he or she performs' (1994: 2). Here, the assumption is quite like that in ethology, save that ethology focuses on repertoires of evolved behaviours, the cultural approach on repertoires of actions, ideas, and values invented long ago, so long ago they can, to all intents and purposes, be considered the equivalent of evolved behaviours. Again, since Humphrey and Laidlaw are mostly concerned with established rites, ritualization per se (the details of those 'particular modifications') is of little interest. For those studying the emergence of new religious traditions, or deep-seated historical changes to an existing tradition, ritual invention, ritual change, ritual creativity, the encodings of actors and ritual modifications ought to be areas of interest. Unfortunately, little work has been done on the creative aspects of ritual (see Gordon-Lennox 2017).

Ritualization as Ritualizing

It makes good sense to distinguish *rites* (or ceremonies) from *ritual*. Rites are nameable and observable—a baptism, for example. Ritual, on the other hand, is a theoretical construct. Sometimes, talk of rites and talk of ritual conflate: people walking to Santiago de Compostella will readily refer to their activity as a *pilgrimage*, and a ritual theorist will conceptualize *pilgrimage* as a type or genre, a slice of the larger

ritual pie. Moreover, the term ritual is often used by scholars when speaking of specific rites or ceremonies. Strictly speaking, a rite, whether encountered in participant observation, in a work of art, or in the pages of a text, is grist to the ritual theory mill. A baptism and a pilgrimage then are 'rites' whereas 'ritual' is what allows us to conceive these two very different actions as being somehow related. That obsessive-compulsive disorders, shaking hands, and a peacock displaying plumage have each been discussed as instances of ritual is evidence enough that ritual cannot be precisely delimited.

The concept of *ritualization* tries to get at where rites come from. Hence, ritualization includes both the creative act (creative, since human beings 'invent' the products of culture) and the element of 'seeing' an action as potential or proto-ritual. As Ronald Grimes uses the term, ritualization refers 'to activity that is not culturally framed as ritual and that someone … interprets as if it were potential ritual' (2014: 193). Jesus' 'this is my body' is an obvious example of 'seeing' proto-ritual. (One could, of course, argue that the narrative and words comprising the Last Supper come after ritualization, as that action's origin or justification.) One might 'think of [ritualization] as infra-, quasi-, or pre-ritualistic' action (Grimes 2014: 193). In early Christianity, rites are not simply 'there', they need to be generated. Hence, Grimes coins an additional term to focus on the process of invention itself, *ritualizing*: 'Ritualizing is the act of cultivating or inventing rites. I use it synonymously with "ritual construction" and "ritual making". The "-izing" ending is a deliberate attempt to suggest a process, a quality of nascence or emergence' (2014: 193). Such a conception has been largely absent from discussions of ritualization; in fact, this way of defining 'ritualizing' is often explicitly excluded from ritual theory, though it bears similarity to Ellen Dissanayake's (2013) discussion of the origins of art, which necessitated coining the terms 'to art' and 'artifying'. For Humphrey and Laidlaw,

> Action is ritualized if the acts of which it is composed are constituted not by the intentions which the actor has in performing them, but by prior stipulation … In adopting the ritual stance one accepts … that in a very important sense, one will not be the author of one's acts. (1994: 97–8)

Such a definition rules out both ritual agency and ritual invention. Yet at some point, in generating a work of art or an established rite, people must artify, they must ritualize. Part of the trouble here is that ritual has generally been defined in relation to one pole of binary sets, sharply juxtaposed with 'normal' or 'everyday' behaviour, or as symbolic, communicative behaviour, rather than intentional, motivated action.

Another significant point made by Grimes is that ritualizing is generally 'not socially supported. Rather, it happens in the margins, on the thresholds; therefore it is alternately stigmatized and eulogized' (Grimes 2014: 193). What appears to be the first instance in English of the word 'ritualize' is in the context of debates and controversies among Anglicans and Anglo-Catholics. G. A. Poole, a clergyman from Leeds, in his *Anglo-Catholic Use of Two Lights upon the Altar* (1840), criticizes ritual innovation:

> This recurrence to a source independent of the Anglican Church will naturally lead the fancies of individuals both to theologize and to ritualize (if I may invent a word) without sufficient reference to the immediate authority to which he is bound to submit. We may be in danger of having Nicene canons or Clementine Liturgies quoted as authorities for customs which the Anglican Church has not sanctioned … Here, then, occurs the immense importance of adhering rigidly to the rubrics, canons, customs, injunctions, and other authorities of the Church in this realm. (Poole 1840: 41)

From the long-term view, ritualization leads to normative, stable, conservative, rites, and rigid adherence. But in the act of inventing or making changes to rites—in ritualizing—the form and meaning of ritual 'canons, customs, and injunctions' are often trigger points for conflict and contestation. This is clear, for example, in the early Christian refusal to perform animal sacrifices; suspicion surrounds ritual dynamics.

Grimes has made the tension between 'ritual criticism' and 'ritual creativity' the leitmotif of his work. We should carefully note that Grimes generally uses the phrase 'ritual creativity' descriptively, not normatively, hence his twinning the term with 'ritual criticism'. Empirically, individuals and groups do deliberately cultivate (create) rites, but creation is not an unequivocally positive good, whatever positive associations talk of creativity may conjure up.

Ritual Invention

Though ritual is generally thought of as a conservative institution, it is not too difficult to imagine ritual invention. A simple example will suffice. Flying a kite is a somewhat special event, though not a ritual occasion. Suppose, however, you were to fly a very particular kite, a kite given to you by a friend at the funeral of your daughter; fly it in a special place, the park that your daughter took her first steps in; fly the kite only twice a year, on her birthday and the day of her death, in the company of close friends and family, each of whom offers a memory or story about your daughter. Do all this and the act is headed in the direction of ritual. At some point, if repeated for years, we may reasonably call such a set of actions a *rite*. If this practice was to be picked up by other members of the community, if such kite flying continued across generations, a fully-fledged liturgical tradition would emerge. The meanings and implications of this rite may well change, disputes may arise, innovations to the kite liturgy may occur. A researcher from the future could return to the moment of creation, and by studying the symbolism of kites, photographs of the original kite, and the letters of the parents and family members, reconstruct an understanding of the meanings, aims, intentions, and significance of this ritual invention. Naturally, such an understanding will be constrained by the nature of hermeneutics: the kind and quality of the data, by cultural differences, by the researcher's proclivities and biases, and so on. Such is the nature of interpretation.

The rites of religious traditions emerge in a process of building up, amplifying, stylizing paradigmatic gestures, acts, and utterances. Behind or within recognizable, formal rites are sets or strips of more ordinary behaviour upon which these rites are built. The heart of a Eucharist liturgy is eating bread and drinking wine—ordinary enough acts, made extraordinary. The Zen Buddhist practice of *kinhin*, a form of walking mediation, takes an everyday, ordinary behaviour—walking—and makes it special. Ordinary actions can be made special in several ways: through stylization and formalization; by repeating an action; by performing acts in a set-aside space; by endowing acts with symbolic meaning, say, linking them to tradition, ancestors, and narratives; by attributing to actions special powers or consequences; by allowing only authorized individuals to perform certain actions. This way of thinking about ritualization eschews the simpler (and common) 'digital' distinction between 'ritual' and 'not ritual'. Rather, 'action displays degrees of ritualization. Actions are not binary, either ritual or not-ritual. Instead, there is a continuum, and events are more or less ritualized, depending on the qualities that appear in them' (Grimes 2014: 193). Mary Catherine Bateson, in a collection of essays on new religious movements, makes a similar point: 'ritualization is a more-or-less phenomenon which may be accounted for in terms of texture … there is a wide overlap between ritualization, the social institution of religion, and the phenomenological experience variously referred to as "cosmic consciousness" or the "idea of the holy"' (Bateson 1974: 150–1).

Individuals or groups might ritualize out of a dissatisfaction with the ritual resources available to them. Rites, because they have conserving functions, may be considered antiquated or moribund or immoral. As with bad-tasting water, people try to clean it or liven it up. People may also ritualize because the well has run dry, and there is no more water; a felt loss of ritual, and the subsequent desire to recover its gifts, are a prominent theme in both scholarship and contemporary popular culture, with roots in the thought of Mircea Eliade and Victor Turner (Stephenson 2015: 107–9). New religious movements or transformative change to existing tradition are characterized by ritual innovation and invention.

Early Christian Ritualizing: Food Sharing

How might this framework developed by Grimes be used in studying early Christian ritual?

First and foremost, it asks us to take seriously the process of invention. To do this, we must move back and forth between social-cultural contexts and the ritualizing of actors. Ritualizing, we may assume, is performed with intentions, and those intentions can only be understood in relation to the social world of ritual actors. Clearly, considerable work has been done from such a perspective. We know a great deal about the ritual contexts informing early Christianity. Historical and anthropological studies of food and dietary laws, purity regulations, anointing practices, sacrificial rites, baptisms, magic and exorcisms—all this and more have been carefully studied in a thorough situating

of the early church in its Jewish and Hellenistic contexts. Ritual innovations in early Christianity involves creative and critical engagement with existing ritual resources, to solve problems, to expand potentials in the given cultural moment.

The theorizing of creative ritualizing may be extended beyond the work done to date, by focusing not only on early Christianity's adaptions, rejections, and innovations with respect to given ritual traditions, but on the way in which the nascent tradition ritualized everyday acts, such as washing and eating. Assuming a more grounded ethological perspective on ritualization may open up greater understanding of emerging Christian ritual.

One example will have to suffice. To date, there have been two main ways that researchers have approached the ritualization of food practices in early Christianity. First, food scarcity was as an overwhelming concern in first-century CE Palestine, and rites and food practices in early Christianity put pause to the idea that ritual is 'non-instrumental'. The Eucharist tradition is many things, but, in its earliest forms, was an actual, shared meal: 'And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts' (Acts 2:46). Fasting too was ritualized, but a central aim was to free up actual portions of food for distribution to others. Early Christian food rituals had a practical aim in mind; more than mere symbols or communicative acts, early Christian rites exhibit instrumentality, a clear form of strong social action. Second, the sharing of meals in early Christianity has been placed in the wider context of food practice in Judaism and Hellenistic culture, examining similarities and differences, and offering interpretations of how these differences helped establish theological positions and negotiate social identities. The insights from ethology, however, have not been systematically applied to early Christian food practices.

The sharing and hoarding of food are ethologically engrained behaviours. According to Eibl-Eibesfeldt, infants show an innate predisposition to share food with both children and adults: the behaviour of extending an outstretched palm, to both receive and give food, develops between ten and twelve months, and the act of giving food is associated with pleasurable moods. Ethologists speculate that this behaviour points to a strong selective advantage in ritualized forms of what may reasonably be called altruistic behaviour. In contrast, the absence of food reciprocity leads to interpersonal and group conflict and tension; lack of food leads to heightened predatory aggression towards others. Among young children in groups with established relationships, food sharing is less common, but quickly resurfaces in moments of tension, conflict, and discord. Generosity, on the other hand, calms a situation down (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1989). John Dominic Crossan persuasively argues that one of early Christianity's key inventions (or creations) is open commensality—an open, shared meal (1993: 261). Is there a connection between ethological and historical research? Do early Christian food ritualizations draw upon innate bodily know-how?

When individuals or groups ritualize, they have two sources to build upon: ethological ritualizations and cultural ritualizations. Most research on early Christian rites

engages with cultural ritualizations: how, for example, did early Christians adapt, relate to, and change Jewish dietary and food purity laws? But discoveries from ethology on the ritualization of food behaviours may also be brought to bear. There is a rich literature on food sharing and food hoarding in animals and humans, as well as a complex discussion of these ritualized behaviours in terms of concepts such as 'reciprocal altruism', 'pilferage tolerance', and 'reciprocity' (Stevens and Gilby 2004).

What else is ritualization but the attempt to drive meaning deeply into the bone, where, in the ordinary, uncontrolled course of things, it cannot be forgotten or otherwise betrayed? What else is ritualization but the collective and corporate attempt to inculcate good habits capable of edging out the bad ones? What else is ritualization but the attempt to learn a set of values and a worldview so thoroughly that ritualists no longer need to think about it at the same time as they are doing it? There may be an optimism bias informing these questions: a culture or group may ritualize food hoarding, an act we are not likely to list among 'good habits'. It seems here, if Crossan's historical reconstruction is correct, that early Christians ritualized a good habit—the sharing of food. The concept of ritualization takes seriously the fact that humans are animals; research on early Christianity might fruitfully adopt such a stance.

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CHAPTER 3

RITUAL AS ACTION, PERFORMANCE, AND PRACTICE

BARRY STEPHENSON

The use of concepts such as action, performance, and practice is common in ritual theory. The aim of this chapter is to provide a concise overview of how these ideas developed in the light of perceived shortcomings in ritual theory, introduce the thought of the principal figures who deploy such language and terminology, alert the reader to the distinct (at times conflicting) meanings of these concepts, and briefly suggest how a performative approach to ritual (broadly conceived) may facilitate understandings of early Christian ritual.

Ritual as Social Glue and Language

The theorizing of ritual in the middle decades of the twentieth century drew heavily on the French sociological tradition. This tradition was indebted to Émile Durkheim's emphasis on the role of rites and performance in reproducing society and Claude Lévi-Strauss's contributions to the structural analysis of cultural forms. These two bodies of theory were subsequently tightly coupled to methods and theories in linguistics and semiotics.

For Durkheim, ritual is the foundational social act. In using the language of action, however, Durkheim does not mean practical action; rather, ritual action is more symbolic than rational, more expressive or emotive than efficacious or instrumental. While ritual is an action that people do, Durkheim's actual theoretical interest lies in the role of ritual in the maintenance of society, ritual as a kind of social glue (Boyer 2002: 30). Durkheim writes of action only in the context of society acting on people in and through ritual performance:

> Society cannot make its influence felt unless it is in action, and it is not in action unless the individuals who compose it are assembled together and act in common. It is

> by common action that it takes consciousness of itself and realizes its position; it is before all else an active co-operation. The collective ideas and sentiments are even possible only owing to these exterior movements which symbolize them, as we have established. Then it is action which dominates the religious life, because of the mere fact that it is society which is its source. (Durkheim 1965: 465–6)

Though using the language of 'action', the word in no way connotes activism or agency. With respect to an individual's agency, Durkheim's is a rather weak view of ritual action in which a society's rites are vehicles of communication, inside of which participants, in a rather automatic or habitual fashion, both transmit and receive society's messages about itself. Durkheim's tacit assumption of ritual agents with little actual agency has remained pervasive in much ritual theory.

Among semantically and semiotically inclined ritual theorists, an exemplary figure is Edmund Leach. Leach's approach to ritual is to treat it 'as a language in a quite literal sense' (1968: 524). Leach makes a tight connection between ritual and myth: 'they are one and the same … as I see it, myth regarded as a statement in words "says" the same thing as ritual regarded as a statement in action' (1965: 11–12). This semiotic approach privileges language as the root metaphor in conceptualizing and analysing rites as the parallels of linguistic signs. Though he does not deny ritual's instrumentality, Leach considers ritual as mainly a way of 'saying' things, a form of communication, the purpose of which is to transmit 'coded information in a manner analogous to sounds and words and sentences of a natural language' (1976: 10). For Leach, ritual is a means of communicating without the use of words. Moreover, for him, ritual mainly communicates about already existing power relations in society, cementing them in place. Unlike language, Leach supposes ritual is relatively uncreative, bound by custom and convention. He also surmises that the 'syntax' of ritual is relatively simple compared to language, and his thinking set the stage for the search for a fundamental or universal 'grammar' of ritual, an approach to ritual that continues to attract considerable attention (see Michaels 2016). Leach's work also gave impetus to developing more robust action-centred theories that pushed off from semiotic approaches due to their perceived limitations. For one, it is extremely difficult to identify clear, distinct actions in rites in the same way that we can identify 'letters' in a sentence. Second, there are many ritual forms, as Victor Turner emphasizes, that are premised on 'liminality', which, by definition, is a space where the normal 'rules' do not apply. Third, embodied performance plays a role in producing meaning. A sentence with a particular syntactical structure can be uttered ironically, defiantly, hesitantly, or angrily, and the same observation holds for ritual performances. So long as the theorizing of ritual remained closely bound to linguistic models and metaphors, rites were seen as inferior to language (though in some theories, perhaps were the progenitor of language); the differences between ritual and language were occluded; and the dynamic, efficacious nature of embodied ritual action was overlooked in favour of mapping out the stable patterns or structures of semantic fields and symbolic referents.

'Ritual as language' theories tend to couple together two foundational assumptions about ritual: (1) ritual is strongly indicative (rather than subjunctive); and (2) ritual is legitimizing (rather than destabilizing). If ritual is language and language sends messages,

then the focus of attention will be on the content of the message (variously generated by 'society', 'power', 'class', 'tradition') and the effect of the message on the receiver. Such a model fits well with a hermeneutics of suspicion and with the Marxist and feminist-inspired critical theories that dominated the humanities and social sciences through the latter decades of the twentieth century.

The Performative Turn

A fresh approach to thinking about ritual in terms of action and performance rather than structures and language was, oddly enough, given impetus in the influential studies of language and rhetoric produced by J. L. Austin (1962) and Kenneth Burke (1968; 1969). The key insight was to emphasize that language not only represents the world but also acts on it. When I say, 'I promise to meet you at the airport', I am not chiefly describing an event or representing reality—rather, I am engaging in the act of making a promise. Austin terms such utterances 'speech acts', distinguishing them from purely indicative statements. Similarly, Burke uses what he calls a 'dramatistic pentad', comprised of 'act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose', mixing terms drawn from the world of theatre with an interest in matters of agency and motivations (1969: xv–xvi). The aim in Burke's analysis is to examine these elements in relation to one another, as ratios or weightings. 'Act', for example, is paired off with scene, agent, agency, purpose. A highly weighted 'scene' (or setting), for example, may override or set limits on the kinds and possibilities of action.

Though neither Burke nor Austin studied actual rites or performances, their new approach to the performative dimensions of language had a significant, if indirect, contribution to theorizing ritual: ritual can be conceptualized and studied with the aid of linguistic metaphors, but 'saying' does not preclude 'acting'—saying and doing, (communicating and acting) need not be conceived as a binary set of categories. Building on the insights of theorists such as Austin, Burke, and Erving Goffman, the 1970s and the 1980s witnessed the 'performative turn' at the intersection of anthropology, religious studies, cultural studies, and performance studies, exemplified in the writings of Victor Turner, Clifford Geertz, Ronald Grimes, and Richard Schechner. Three key dimensions characterized this new body of dramatistically inclined ritual theory.

An Alternative to Linguistics and Structuralism

First, the emergence of performance theories challenged the dominance of semiotics and structuralism, introducing a new set of foundational terms and metaphors through which to approach ritual. Don Handelman's short study of the Palio festival in Siena is a case in point. Handelman's description of the Palio, a centuries-old Italian festival built around a horse race, is peppered with terms such as 'subsystem', 'structures',

'stratification', 'scale', 'connections', 'parts', 'axes', 'models', 'unit', 'levels', and 'position' (1990: 116–19). This is the metaphorical language of structuralism, with the units and parts of the ritual taking their meaning from the analogous units and parts of the larger society. In performance theory, in contrast, one is apt to encounter terms such as 'role', 'backstage', 'social drama', 'transformance', 'audience', 'rehearsal', 'process', and 'creativity'.

Some ritual theorists argue that the language of 'performance' applied to ritual sets one on the slippery slope of overextended analogy (Bell 1992: 42); but the language of performance seems far less abstract when compared to the language of 'grammar', 'text', or 'structure'. For Clifford Geertz, the use of the 'text analogy' in the social sciences is more suspect than that of 'game' or 'drama'. Though Geertz is not, technically speaking, a performance theorist, he clearly sees the foundational insight and theoretical critique informing performance approaches to ritual. For Geertz, applying the metaphor of 'text'

> [to] social action, to people's behavior toward other people, involves a thoroughgoing conceptual wrench, a particularly outlandish bit of 'seeing-as'. Describing human conduct in the analogy of player and counterplayer, or of actor and audience, seems, whatever the pitfalls, rather more natural than describing it in that of writer and reader. *Prima facie*, the suggestion that the activities of spies, lovers, witch doctors, kings, or mental patients are moves or performances is surely a good deal more plausible that the notion that they are sentences. (Geertz 1983: 30)

Conceptually, the notion of performance is often met with tacit suspicion. The verbs 'to perform' or 'to act' mean 'to do' but also 'to pretend', and so performing and acting are often thought of as being filled with pretence. But 'to pretend' has other meanings: to intend; to design; to plot; to attempt; to hold before one; to extend. We need not divorce the serious, or the even the sacred, from performance. To speak of human action in terms of performance is not to imply either fakery or lack of authenticity.

Performance Traditions

Second, performance as a theoretical and analytic category serves to highlight the fact that ritual traditions often incorporate the performing arts, so that a proper understanding of ritual involves questions of poetics and aesthetics, along with a willingness to make moves across disciplinary boundaries and cultural domains, studying ritual in relation to other genres of action, such as theatre, sports, and play. Cross-culturally, ritual does indeed include words, but it also typically includes music or rhythmic accompaniment; dance or other stylized bodily movements; masking, costuming, and make-up. Bruce Kapferer (1983: 179) and Richard Schechner (2003) each argue that aesthetics deserves a more prominent place in ritual studies.

In many of his influential essays (which in many respects constituted the emergence of the field of 'performance studies'), Richard Schechner explores the close relationships between ritual and theatre traditions. Schechner places performance on a continuum

that runs from *efficacy* to *entertainment*. Ritual can entertain, and theatre can have real consequences. Nevertheless, Schechner tends to associate ritual with efficacy. The more theatre pushes in the direction of efficacy and transformation, the more ritual-like it becomes; the more ritual heads in the direction of entertainment, the more theatrical-like (and the more entertaining) it becomes. When a performance is efficacious, Schechner speaks of 'transformance', a coinage meant to emphasize the role of performance (whether ritual or dramatic) in processes of social, psychological, or spiritual transformation. Schechner is particularly interested in cultural forms where entertainment and efficacy come to form a tight braid, as in the cases of Greek tragedy, the medieval mystery plays sponsored by the Catholic Church, and Elizabethan theatre (Schechner 2003: 128–36).

In cultural anthropology, due largely to the work of Milton Singer and Clifford Geertz, it has become common to use observable, cultural performances (including rites) as windows onto a group's worldview and values. Singer conducted ethnographic research in India in the mid-1950s. In his attempt to find a way to study the cultural patterns of India, he settled on what he termed 'cultural performances', observable public events, bounded in space and time. Rites and other performances, Singer suggested, were 'the elementary constituents of the culture and the ultimate units of observation' (1955: 27). Geertz, explicitly building on Singer, developed his influential studies of a culture's emotions, attitudes, and ideas via studying cultural performances:

> religious ritual … involves this symbolic fusion of ethos and worldview … in which a broad range of moods and motivations on the one hand and metaphysical conceptions on the other are caught up, which shape the spiritual consciousness of a people … 'cultural performances' … represent not only the point at which the dispositional and conceptual aspects of religious life converge for the believer, but also the point at which the interaction between them can be most readily examined by the detached observer. (Geertz 1973: 113)

Theoretically, Geertz explored several metaphorical options for interpreting cultural lifeworlds, including game, drama, and text, attempting to mediate between the experiential focus characteristic of performance theories and the expressive, communicative focus of symbolic action theories (1983: 30–2).

Performance continues to be a significant conceptual notion in ritual studies, especially in contexts where ritual is closely intertwined with music, the visual arts, and theatrical or performance traditions. In a series of works, Bruce Kapferer has highlighted the ways in which embodied performance in ritual is a means of creating and sharing mutual experiences. In his studies of exorcism rites in Sri Lanka, Kapferer argues the 'members of the ritual gathering are not confined within their own experience and understandings, but by their interaction they are able to stand outside themselves and interpret their experience through shared constructs and understandings' (1986: 197). In his major contribution to ritual theory, Kapferer develops the concept of 'virtuality', which points to how, within the ritual frame, 'actuality' (the ordinary, everyday world)

is constrained, condensed, and transformed; ritual entails a 'radical slowing down and entry within the constructional moments in which human beings realize themselves and their world' (1997: 180). Ritual performance is less a representation of reality and more a technical practice aimed at creating, constructing, and controlling reality.

Negotiation and Social Drama

Third, performance approaches to ritual tend to emphasize the role of ritual in processes of social negotiation, as well as the socially disruptive and transformative potentials of ritual practices. In performance theories, rites are viewed not chiefly as mimetic and confirmatory of underlying social structures, but rather as being capable of revealing and processing oppressive or staid social relations and dynamics. There are many rites that appear to wrestle with the fact of social tensions and discord in a more open and forward-looking, rather than purely stabilizing, fashion. In recent years, the notion of ritual as a form of social 'negotiation' has gained currency (Hüsken and Neubert 2012). Applied to ritual, the term negotiation draws attention to the debates, reflexivity, and grievances—expressed in a shout, delivered with a glance, carried on a banner—present in diverse rites and cultural performances. In a narrower sense, the term points to a ritual type, to a genre of rites grounded in processes of negotiation aimed at settling something: a Catholic papal election, a nineteenth-century Yiddish wedding ceremony, a modern-day courtroom judgment. The ritual frame of these rites of negotiation must be flexible enough to allow for movement and shifting, yet solid enough to contain and ultimately resolve differences: a pope must be elected; the parents must agree on a contract; the jury must deliver a verdict. When ritual negotiation is unable to resolve tensions, conflict may escalate.

One of Victor Turner's key ideas is that social conflict transpires in dramatic fashion, and he identifies four phases in what he termed 'social drama': breach, crisis, redress, and reconciliation or irreparable breach (1987: 74–5). According to Turner, a social drama unfolds when there is a breach of normative modes of social life that, if not sealed off or addressed, can lead to a state of crisis capable of splitting the social fabric into two or more contending groups. In response to this situation redressive action occurs. In general, redress refers to any action evoked in response to social crisis: political debate, legal procedures, military action. But Turner is particularly interested in the role of ritual and other genres of cultural performance as instruments of redress. If successful, redressive action leads to reconciliation and reintegration. But redressive action may also serve to fuel a crisis and lead to the recognition of an irreparable breach, with a radical restructuring of social relationships as the inevitable result. In either case, redress involves a 'clash between conserving and reforming parties' (Turner 1982: 109).

Turner is well aware that a social crisis evokes reactionary responses that draw on normative forms of ritualized action; these actions he refers to as 'ceremony'. Ceremony functions to reinforce or re-establish normative social relationships during times of crisis. A broad conception of ritual would include both ritual as liminal and potentially transformative and ceremony as normative and conservative. Turner associates ritual

(in a strict sense) with liminality, reflexivity, and a subjunctive mood. 'Liminality can perhaps be described as a fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities, not by any means a random assemblage but a striving after new forms and structure, a gestation process, a fetation of modes appropriate to and anticipating postliminal existence.' Ritual is potentially transformative insofar as it allows 'the contents of group experiences [to be] replicated, dismembered, remembered, refashioned, and mutely or vocally made meaningful' (Turner 1991: 12–13). Turner is not always consistent in his usage of terms, often using the term ritual to refer to both liminal and ceremonial performances. Turner's point, however, is clear; ritual can function as an agent of redress in different ways: as a glue to maintain the status quo, as a crowbar to leverage a group into a new social position, or as a liminal generative 'storehouse of possibilities'.

Practice Theory

Practice theory is closely associated with the thought of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and the transmission and application of his ideas in the work of Catherine Bell. Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) is based on fieldwork in Algeria among the Kayble. Bourdieu's neo-Marxist analysis examined the ways in which, through social practices (including ritual) a society maintains and justifies an unequal allocation of resources and concomitant class divisions and hierarchies. Bourdieu approaches ritual not as a specific type of action, but as part of a larger cultural system, and he emphasizes the political (and hence strategic, negotiated, contested) dimensions of social dynamics. One of Bourdieu's key concerns is to navigate a binary opposition between social structure (rules, organizations, customs, statuses) and the agency of individuals; structuralism tends to overlook agency, but voluntarism overlooks the determinative power and force of given social forms. Bourdieu's mediating concept is 'practice': within the given constraints and meanings constituted by 'social fields', agents strive (negotiate, contest) to acquire or maintain relative positions in that field. Social action is here understood as kind of arena of struggle. *Habitus* (not to be confused with habit) is one of Bourdieu's key concepts. Individuals are presented with given forms of meaning, given ways of thinking, feeling, acting, and evaluating; these relatively stable forms Bourdieu terms the *habitus*, which 'produces [individual] practices in accordance with the schemes engendered by history' (977: 82). The *habitus* is 'the strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations' (1977: 72).

Though seemingly dialectical, much practice theory is aimed at analysing and critiquing the ways in which social practices, such as ritual, reproduce society; the hermeneutic tends to be one of suspicion, focused on the way rites 'inscribe' ideas and values into the body. Ritual as such is not problematic, but given that ritual's central function is to reproduce rather hegemonic and oppressive social relationships, rites are viewed with considerable misgivings. For Bell, ritual is mainly about the production of 'ritualized bodies'; for Bourdieu, ritual is about the production of 'classed bodies'. An important

(and perhaps untenable) assumption of practice theories is that 'practitioners', by definition, are not self-reflexive: 'there is every reason to think that as soon as [a practitioner] reflects on his practice, adopting a quasi-theoretical posture, the agent loses any chance of expressing the truth of his practice … The very nature of practice is that it excludes this question' (Bourdieu 1990: 91). Bourdieu here introduces another binary opposition between the kind of doing (or acting or practising) entailed in ritual versus thinking, conceiving, reflecting, and evaluating. But could not ritual be a way of thinking with the body? Bourdieu assumes not. In practice theory, ritualists are imagined as a kind of malleable wax, into which ritual impresses values, beliefs, and social roles and statuses. Bell refers to the ritualized body as containing 'socially instinctive automatisms', suggesting that the body engaging in ritual is not really engaging at all but is more of a passive receptor of codes and scripts that lie outside, in our wider social world (1992: 99). The language of 'inscription' and 'automatisms' removes agency from ritual actors.

Bourdieu's key observation is that in practices such as ritual, analysing discourse along purely linguistic and communicative means is never sufficient; it is not enough to understand the content of a delivered message; rather, the full measure of ritual practice is only understood through an analysis of the situated nature of enactment, and the subtexts of constructing social power. Bell suggests that those engaged in ritual fundamentally 'misrecognize' what they are doing. Gift giving, one of Bourdieu's examples, seems an act of generosity. What we are really doing, however, is establishing a tacit relationship of power in which the recipient becomes indebted to the gift-giver. If we were to recognize what was really happening, the function of gift-giving (establishing lines of authority and dominance) would implode, hence the basic assumption of Bourdieu's that ritual necessarily proceeds on the basis of misrecognition and false consciousness. Certainly there are cases in which ritual actors are largely blind and passive to the implications of the rites in which they participate; studying the exploitative and ideological dimensions of ritual is important. But embodiment can mean more than rendering people susceptible to hegemonic values and beliefs.

Action

In the literature of ritual studies, the notion of 'action' is used in two very different, at times even antithetical, ways. At issue is how agency is conceptualized. Kenneth Burke writes, 'things move, people act' (1972: 21). Burke's point, a rebuttal of behaviourist psychology, is that action is not reducible to motion; in studying symbolic action, warns Burke, we must include questions of meaning, agency, intention, and motivation. Burke defines action as the 'human body in conscious or purposive motion', and only human bodies are capable of action; a 'baseball … is neither moral nor immoral, it cannot act, it can only move, or be moved' (1969: 14, 136). Tacitly following Burke's dramatistic approach, Ronald Grimes defines ritual as 'embodied, condensed, and prescribed enactment' (Grimes 2014: 195). That ritual is 'prescribed' draws attention to a rite's formal

properties, to its rootedness in tradition, and to its relatively conservative nature; but in deploying the term 'enactment', Grimes emphasizes that ritual entails a 'putting into force' and action in a Burkean sense. Grimes recognizes a useful distinction between behaviour and action; the former focuses on surface observables, the latter inquiring about an actor's intentions and meanings:

> Behavior objectifies, action does not. Although objectifying can be dehumanizing, objectification is a normal, necessary thing. It is okay to objectify a person or a ritual, provided that is not the only thing you do to 'it'. By this usage, the more ritualists act predictably, the more they behave and the less they act. (Grimes 2014: 243)

When Burke or Grimes use the language of action, they mean mainly matters of intention, motivation, and agency among ritual actors. Other theorists, however, when they use the word 'action' are, in effect, speaking of what Grimes terms 'behavior'. In the method proposed by Grimes, tending to both meaningful, motivated action and more or less meaningless, scripted behaviour is variously called for in analysing and interpreting rites. The tendency in studies of ritual, however, has been to move in one direction or the other.

Anthropologist Roy Rappaport, for example, the creator of one of the most ambitious and comprehensive theories of ritual, defines ritual as 'the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers' (1999: 24). Though he speaks of 'acts' and 'performers', Rappaport shows little interest in ritual actors per se. A great deal hinges on Rappaport's use of the three words—'not entirely encoded'. Just how much 'encoding' are ritual actors actually engaging in? Around this question scholarship tends to divide, and one must take care when reading the word 'action' in ritual theory. In some instances, 'action' refers to individual and group agency within and informing the ritual frame, while in other cases, it refers to the purely formal set or sequences of 'acts' (gestures, postures, utterances) that ritualists perform; generally, the latter body of theory is rooted in linguistic metaphors and concerned with symbolism, communication, and meanings, the former in performative metaphors and concerned with matters of agency, embodiment, dynamics, and efficacy. The great challenge of ritual theory is to find ways of mediating this underlying binary distinction.

In the notion of ritual developed by Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw, action is ritual action by virtue of a commitment not to be the author of one's own acts, by a relinquishing of agency:

> Action is ritualized if the acts of which it is composed are constituted not by the intentions which the actor has in performing them, but by prior stipulation … In adopting the ritual stance one accepts … that in a very important sense, one will not be the author of one's acts. (Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994: 299)

Such a conception, emphasizing stipulated and conventionalized acts, is found in a variety of theoretical approaches to ritual. Stanley Tambiah, for example, states:

> [R]ituals as conventionalized behavior are not designed or meant to express the intentions, emotions, and states of mind of individuals in a direct, spontaneous and "natural" way … we can say that a large part of the intentions of the actors as regards the purpose and results of the ritual are already culturally defined, presupposed, and conventionalized. (1981: 124, 127)

For Frits Staal, ritual is phylogenetically derived behaviour (based on naturally evolutionary relationships), and hence without any deep meaning, aims, or goals (Staal 1979). Rites may have useful side effects, or even deep meaning ascribed to them, but these effects and meanings are the product of religious ideas, conceptions, stories, and values that are projected onto ritual actions, not inherent in the rites themselves. Staal develops a thoroughgoing syntactical approach to the basic units or sequences of action constituting a rite, and eschews any effort to analyse ritual in terms of semantics. Staal's theory has been roundly critiqued, not least because linguistics (which is Staal's conceptual foundation for analysing rites) readily acknowledges that language comes with phonological, syntactical, and semantic dimensions, and that these dimensions cannot be simply separated and examined in isolation. Syntax involves studying how signs are combined, but signs themselves have referents, which constitute their meaning. 'Given the … evidence from linguistics, Staal's position is simply wrong' (Penner 1985: 11).

Staal's approach is an extreme example of ritual formalism, yet it points to a major question in ritual theory regarding how best to understand the formal, conventional properties of much ritual. Humphrey and Laidlaw, in *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual* (1994), divide ritual into two broad classes: shamanism and liturgy. Shamanism is rooted in the enactment of a convincing, theatrical-like performance before an audience, an audience that stands in need of convincing of the reality or authenticity of the performance. Liturgy, in contrast, entails the proper performance of a more or less fixed script, in a setting where everyone is a participant, properly playing their particular role. In shamanistic or magical rites, the focus is on efficacy, on how well the rite works; in liturgy, the focus is on getting it right, enacting the rite in a formal, standardized way. The point Humphrey and Laidlaw are making is that in many kinds of rites (which they refer to as 'liturgy'), the emphasis is on a communal, shared enactment of gestures and utterances, and deployment of objects and symbols, the form of which come to us from outside ourselves. Such actions are 'archetypal', not in the sense of deriving from some deep inner principle in the psyche, but from the fact they are inherited or received from tradition. Liturgy has a pre-existing form, and ritualists repeat and mimic these pre-existing, elemental actions. What this means is that a participant in ritual is, in an important way, not the author of his or her own actions. For theorists of ritual's archetypal (or conventional or stipulated, or formal) features, handing over of agency is the core quality of the ritual frame.

The interesting feature of this approach is that it uses the dynamic relationship between action and intention as a tool to analyse and classify different kinds of behaviour. Much of our everyday behaviour only makes sense within the context of communicating meanings and intentions. If I shout, 'Don't touch the pot; it's hot', I have a clear

message or intention informing the action: I do not want you to burn your hand. Everyday action only makes sense if premised on the assumption that what we do is an expression of our intentional and emotional state. A different kind of dynamic arises when this premise breaks down, or is perceived to break down. Someone who feigns being upset by shedding tears is engaging in a certain kind of action—deception—which works (or fails) to the degree that we perceive or experience a fit between intentions and acts.

Ritual is a different way of framing or paying attention to the connections between what one is doing and what one is thinking or feeling. In ritual, it is the doing of the rite that is primary. Ritual is not an expression of intentions, motivations, feelings, or beliefs; rather, ritual entails engaging in specific, formalized acts not of one's own making. 'Liturgy' (as used by Humphrey and Laidlaw and Rappaport) has a digital quality to it; you either do it or not. Unlike, say, sports, where one can play a good game one week and perform poorly the next, liturgy either happens, or not; on, or off. If you overthrow the receiver, playing poorly, you are still playing the game. But if the host is not consecrated in a communion service; if the wedding ring is forgotten at home; if the young man refuses to read from the Torah at Bar Mitzvah—in such cases we do not have a poorly executed rite, but rather we have no rite at all.

When we assume ritual is a medium of communication, or a system of symbols, it becomes one among many such mediums, and we locate ritual in terms of a realm of meaning and signification that precedes and surrounds it. Action-centred theory affirms ritual as a unique form of human behaviour irreducible to something other than itself. Second, the liturgical dimension of ritual allows us to broaden our notion of agency. Normally, we think of agency as being located in individuals, having to do with matters of will, intentionality, choice, and desire. But there is a wider, distributed agency at work in ritual, and more recent theory attempts to better understand how this distributed agency works, and in so doing bridge the gap between syntactical and semiotic concerns. For Michael Houseman, ritual is a way of acting out (and thus actualizing or creating) special 'relationships'. Linguistic communication, argues Houseman, is a 'poor model for understanding what is going on in ritual' because rites do not 'say' things, but rather 'do' these things; ritual is 'used less to convey information than to accomplish certain acts, to demonstrate the presence of non-human agents, to establish certain undeniable authorities, or to define … identity'. Houseman conceives the realities that people enact in ritual as 'relationships' and 'relationships constitute lived-through experiences sustained by intentionally and emotionally laden events' (2006: 414–16). In everyday behaviour, dispositions drive actions; if I am sorry, I will apologize. In ritual, argues Houseman, the relationship runs in the opposite direction and 'dispositions proceed from behavior'. In everyday interactions, the tacit question is, 'given what I feel (and what I can infer from others' feelings, what should I be doing?' In ritual action, the tacit, informing orientation is, 'given what I am doing (and what I perceive others doing), what should I be feeling?' (Houseman 2006: 422). Houseman uses the language of 'emergence' to articulate the entailments of ritual enactment; less a 'code' that signifies messages, ritual is an

'idiom' that constellates relationships and designates the presence and workings of various agents (gods, ancestors, powers, society, laws). Similarly, Edward Schieffelin develops the notion of 'participation' to describe a quality of ritual that involves giving oneself over to something larger or beyond one's distinct identity as an individual. That much ritual involves active group participation raises epistemological questions about 'privileged Western modes of understanding', which emphasize 'differentiation and alterity'. Participation, in contrast, points to a privileging of 'resonance, identification, and engagement' (Schieffelin 2006: 616).

Another prominent action-centred theory is Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley's cognitive approach, which cobbles together insights from evolutionary biology, psychology, structural linguistics, and anthropology. Shaped by structuralist concerns, this theory pushes past surface performances, in an attempt to discern the implied 'grammar' of ritual actions. Inherent to this deep structure, they argue, is a conceptual scheme involving a 'culturally postulated superhuman agent's action' on a 'patient', though ritual performance (the 'instrument') (Lawson and McCauley 1990: 176). This structure of action guides processes of reasoning, explanation, inference, as well as perceived goals, consequences, and predictions. Ritual, in other words, is a cognitive process or system. Note here that ritual 'action' in Lawson and McCauley's theory is conceived as structurally similar to any kind of social action: 'differences between everyday action and religious ritual action turn out to be fairly minor' and 'the cognitive apparatus for the representation of religious ritual form is the same system deployed for the representation of action in general' (Lawson and McCauley 2002: 8). Such an understanding of ritual is very different from that developed by Houseman or Rappaport, who argue for the unique features of ritual action compared to everyday interactions (and hence its unique effects). Lawson and McCauley also devise a typology of 'special agent rituals', 'special patient rituals', 'special instrument rituals'. Rites can be classified according to where the culturally postulated 'superhuman agent' is slotted into this cognitive system: the 'god' either does the action (special agent), receives the action (special patient), or a specially powered instrument is used in the action. Lawson and McCauley also generate several hypotheses (which in some respects are testable) about these various ritual types. Special agent rites, for example, are hypothesized to include higher degrees of sensory pageantry, which is required to arouse emotional responses capable of convincing or persuading participants that something extraordinary has taken place.

Applications

Applying ritual theory to the study of Christian origins (or generally to any cultural tradition or moment) calls for thinking through the relationships between theory, case, and method. Structural and semiotic understandings of ritual generally emphasize the

conservative, rule-bound, formal, and referential qualities of many rites and ritual traditions, and therefore such theory has trouble dealing with the processual, strategic, and efficacious qualities of ritual action. In studying moments of religious transformation and change, such as the rise and dynamics of early Christian communities, action and performance-oriented theories may well offer insights not available in other theoretical paradigms. Of those theories that deploy various conceptions of action, performance, and practice, some are truly theoretical (Lawson and McCauley or Rappaport, for example), while others tend to be case-based histories, ethnographies, and essays that may use or develop some theoretical terminology, intermingling it with social-cultural description and interpretive reflection (Turner, Geertz, and Schechner). The former type tends to look to cases as sources of data; when the theory is brought to bear on the data, what one can see is constrained by what the theory excludes. Lawson and McCauley, for example, rule out religions without superhuman agents. The second body of work tends to be more rooted in social-cultural analysis, and is perhaps of greater value to those doing religious and cultural histories, seeking to incorporate reflection on ritual practices. Here, we can offer but a few suggestions for potentially fruitful lines of inquiry.

The procession that Jesus leads into Jerusalem (Mark 11:8–10; Matt. 21:4–5) seems well suited to a performative (as opposed to a cognitive) analysis. Though clearly an allusion to Zechariah (9:9–10), the act is unintelligible in the absence of a discussion of strategically and symbolically informed motivations and intentions, and these seem to involve a parodying of triumphal processional entries by Roman troops into Jerusalem that took place on major feast days. Festivals—and Passover is an excellent example—often take place at locations made special (even sacred) through a variety of architectural, commemorative, narrative, and ritual practices and strategies, the latter including parades and processions, public acts meant to be seen, to be witnessed. Festival grounds, because of their public, spectacle-like atmosphere tend to invite chaos and acting out, as much as ceremony and formality. The Palm Sunday procession is clearly a planned demonstration. Jesus asks the disciples to go ahead of him and secure a colt (Mark 11:1–6), the owners readily offer it when they understand the nature of its use, and festival-goers participate by covering the road, transforming it into a processional route. One could argue on definitional grounds that Jesus' anti-triumphal entry is not ritual; but it is most certainly ritualized action, taking its meaning and significance from the social field of a genre of political-religious processional rites characteristic of ancient Israel and Rome.

If ritual is viewed in terms of negotiation, strategic action, and social dramas, then it makes sense that early Christianity, in defining its unique concerns and visions, would deploy ritual and ritualized acts and counter-acts a means to, as Turner puts it, 'communicate about the communication system itself' (1987: 76). Turner's conception of *social drama* and Bourdieu's theorizing of *practice* have yet to be fully applied to the ritual dynamics of early Christianity. Bourdieu's practice theory, concerned as it is with questions of social class and political power, is typically applied to the rites of hegemonic power. In early Christianity, rites and ritualized act are used as forms of critique and resistance. Researchers could focus in particular on the strategic use of ritual during celebratory and festival occasions prior to Christianity's assimilation and consolidation

as the religion of the empire, as these moments in religious and political calendars tend to court reflexive, subjunctive kinds of actions among marginalized groups. Along these lines, Michael Penn (2005) has explored how the social practices of kissing in Graeco-Roman culture were strategically incorporated into liturgical practices in early Christian communities as means to develop new identities and forms of community and relationships that superseded that of the family.

A potential shortcoming of such cultural approaches is that ritual is conceived as only one among many cultural practices, rather than approached as very specific and unique form of human behaviour. The contributions of symbolic anthropology and phenomenological approaches focus narrowly on ritual's peculiarities and attempt to explain what these peculiarities entail. In this regard, the kinds of analyses developed by Houseman, Schieffelin, Kapferer, and Rappaport are deserving of greater attention in analysing early Eucharist and baptismal traditions, qua ritual. By each of these theorists, there is an attempt to think through the nature of ritual performance as conventionalized, stipulated action in terms of how this action generates a distributive agency, what Rappaport terms the 'entailments' of specific ritual forms. There are two obvious features of ritual, suggests Rappaport. First, ritual has a formal, invariant structure; people, if they engage in ritual, must necessarily—if tacitly—assent to and conform to that structure. Second, there is no ritual if it is not performed. To consider ritual as an alternative, secondary medium for expressing what could otherwise be (perhaps more easily) expressed is to miss what is distinctive about ritual: a rite requires performance. Rappaport's 'entailments', Houseman's language of 'emergence', Schieffelin's development of 'virtuality', and Kapferer's discussions of 'participation' are relevant to interpretations of the ethos and effects of early Christian ritual.

Much of the discourse of early Christianity is concerned with what we could term 'presence'. Paul speaks throughout his letters of being 'in Christ'; Jesus, in his conversation with the Samaritan woman, speaks of worshipping 'in spirit and truth' (John 4:23); in Matthew's Gospel the presence of the 'Lord' is inscribed in acts of compassion and kindness: 'just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me' (Matt. 25:40). For Rappaport, a function of ritual (as stipulated, conventionalized action) is to manifest the presence of sanctity and generate what he terms 'Ultimate Sacred Postulates'. For Rappaport, rites do not point to the sacred or reflect the sacred but rather are the very thing; the substance of the sacred is 'not merely claimed, postulated or advanced, but it's constituted by the performativeness intrinsic to liturgical orders themselves' (1999: 278). Here, Rappaport's understanding of sacred presence is quite similar to that found in Matthew; the sacred is the act, rather than the act reflecting or mirroring the sacred. Schieffelin moves away from conceiving rites in terms of representational forms to 'processes of practice and performance' capable of making 'present realities vivid enough to beguile, amuse, or terrify'. Ritual performance entails the 'creation of presence' (1996: 59–60). Schieffelin mobilizes a host of terminology—'agenda', 'means', 'strategy', 'embodiment', 'enactment'—all aimed to 'show how a performative analysis can contribute to understanding the emergence of consequential realities in the historical world' (1996: 84). These kinds of analyses of ritual would reverse what

has been a common approach in religious studies, conceiving of ideas and values as the source of ritual; in theories of ritual's entailments, ritual becomes the generative force.

Religious ideas and values (along with the experiences they entail) are, argues Rappaport, the logical offspring of ritual. Ritual language—'this is my body'—is performatively established. Once conventionalized, such performatively established concepts and presences may well be mistakenly construed as 'statements', 'as a report or description of a state of affairs existing independently of [performative utterances]' (Rappaport 1999: 278). In this regard, Humphrey and Laidlaw suggest that 'in Christianity, religious authorities have often been able to give fairly stable meanings to a ritual and enforce allegiance to these meanings' (1994: 7). When meanings precede ritual action, however, we lose sight of the distinctive properties of a rite, and dispositions, feelings, or intention drive or envelope the action, rather than dispositions, feelings, and intentions deriving from conventionalized action. Considerations of the 'virtuality' of ritual as a dynamic, imaginative space capable of disturbing or disrupting determinative forms (Kapferer), or the 'special relationships' constituted in ritual as the means to mediate between objective social worlds and subjective experiences and intentions (Houseman), tend to the specifics (the form) and contexts (the symbolism) of ritual, in an attempt to better understand the kinds of agency and effects inherent in ritual action. These relational and performative approaches to ritual are tacit in Penn's study of ritual kissing, but their theoretical apparatus could be brought more explicitly and systematically to bear. The methodological challenge, however, is that access to early Christian ritual comes principally through texts, and these texts have already started the process of inscribing meaning, significance, and theology to ritual actions.

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CHAPTER 4

RITUAL, IDENTITY, AND EMOTION

DOUGLAS J. DAVIES

Introduction

Given that ritual, identity, and emotion cover three fields of enormous depth, as does religion, this chapter's modest aim is to show how selected anthropologists and some sociologists have highlighted the place of human emotions when seeking to discuss the nature of ritual and identity within religious worlds. This approach is more general than overly programmatic and while its eclectic outlook has emerged from decades of fieldwork, social survey research, and theological interest in groups available for direct study, it will also venture into more speculative theoretical consideration of some very specific New Testament themes (Davies 1984a; 2000; 2002; 2004; 2010; 2011). In three major sections, the chapter begins with a preparatory theoretical reflection on emotions to provide a stable reference point before the second section describes a mixed set of selected anthropological theories of ritual.

The third section then becomes more interpretative, developing notions of personhood and reciprocity of potential relevance to early Christian organization. The rise of most new religious movements involves some redefining of a devotee's identity and of their mutual relationships expressed through the symbolic embodiment of their core beliefs manifest in shared ritual behaviour. In this case we propose that one way of considering early Christian identity might be grounded less in terms of the sharply defined 'individual' and more in terms of the concept of 'dividual' personhood. Just as the second section concerns numerous anthropological-sociological theories of emotions embedded in ritual activity, the third section takes a slightly different methodological turn to focus on the importance of how personhood is defined, and on some potential entailments of that definition for several New Testament contexts. The reason for this discussion lies in the fact that how we think of personhood influences how we consider the nature of ritual, of identity, and of the dynamics of emotion pervading each.

A brief conclusion acts as a cautionary reminder of the constant need to contextualize ritual within wider cultural activities.

Preliminary Reflections

This chapter's approach rests on a series of propositions, namely, that as and when certain ideas are invested with emotional force they generate 'values'; that when such values contribute to personal or group identity they constitute beliefs; and that if these beliefs frame a sense of destiny they can be classified as religious beliefs. Ritual then becomes significant as one influential aspect of formal behaviour through which these links are generated, intensified, and fostered.

This shorthand approach should not be understood as a cause-effect model, nor as giving 'ideas' precedence over 'emotions'; nor should it be aligned with the old myth-ritual debate in anthropology (Segal 1998) While one person may hear of an idea and, over time, develop an emotional investment in it, others encounter an emotion-linked idea from the outset. In fact, this is how many 'doctrines' are first encountered or 'experienced' within contexts of worship. Societies at large, and religious groups in particular, host hundreds of 'ideas'. In religious contexts we might call them 'doctrinal ideas', and over time these rise and fall in terms of their persuasive effect and popularity. The status shift from being a 'mere idea' to becoming a religious belief framing a group or person's sense of destiny involves complex processes that always need their own historical, cultural, and biographical analysis to assess the sense of 'elective affinity' involved (Davies 2015: 60, 267). Still, this shorthand proposition on emotion-pervaded ideas, identity, and destiny may serve as an *aide-mémoire* during the following discussion of numerous theories of ritual that might otherwise seem rather unconnected. This scheme is likely to be useful when approaching the early period of a religious group's formation and later periods of development, reformation, and revitalization, times when some 'ideas' are generated, appropriated, and become pervaded by emotion, or lose their emotional attraction and fall into disuse: there are many 'dead doctrines'.

Just which emotions are involved will always demand contextual analysis, but a sense of excitement allied with fear and hope are likely to be much in evidence in salvation-related groups. Excitement is paramount for ritual-emotional analysis, for its key players, for arenas of action, for periods of reduced or absence of excitement, and for times of revitalization or sectarian innovation. New religious movements are hardly credible apart from emotional intensification of ideological visions of the world. One key theoretical root for such an assertion lies in Charles Darwin's seminal work on human and animal emotions. His theoretical stress pinpointed the dynamics of excitement and depression embraced through bodily and communal feelings and the mind-linked feelings of attraction to ideas and to the satisfaction gained from formal explanations of the way things are (Darwin 1872). It is precisely from the interplay of embodied sensations with imaginative ideas that 'truths' sustaining religious identity emerge, frequently mediated by prophets and reformers during charismatically framed periods of creative change.

An apt encouragement for considering the interplay of ritual with human identity and emotion lies in d'Aquili and Laughlin's bold assertion that ritual provides

one of humanity's few resources for solving the 'ultimate problems and paradoxes of human existence' (1979: 179). Their neuroscientific approach is one among many social-scientific approaches to the notion of embodiment, with its stress on the body and bodily activity as the dynamic nexus of ritual (Uro 2016: 154–77). Even so, the potency of coherence between emotion and identity was not as forcefully expressed as it might be. Others have pressed ideas of ritual as being a satisfying behavioural end in itself while still others prefer to see ritual as behavioural codes to be cracked (Davies 2002: 111–43).

For our purposes ritual is taken as intentionally patterned behaviour possessing associated emotions, typified in periodic human activity centred on values that frame people's sense of identity. Identity is taken rather simply to denote a person's sense of who they are as the human process of meaning-making is captured at the personal level, while emotion is acknowledged to be the feeling states of individuals described within a society by distinctive names. All are contested concepts (Asad 1988; Craib 1998; Fessler 1999; Rappaport 1999; Davies 2011). These admittedly simple shorthand descriptions offer a rapid way into considering detailed accounts of particular anthropologists drawn largely but not exclusively from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century.

Theoretically speaking, we assume that there exists an interplay of ritual, identity, and emotion, underlying the fundamental sociological question of how an individual relates to society, just as the fundamental theological question considers how an individual relates to God. Moreover, such a dynamic process also depends for an answer on the pattern of emotions framing that relationship, with identity being a prime concept capturing the individual's appropriation of social options. Different cultures and religious traditions set their preferred pattern of emotion and identity alongside cherished doctrinal ideas in practices that social science often describes in terms of embodiment, *habitus*, and *gestus*.[1]

Emotions are the energy-drivers of human life whose natural force is much shaped by society, with diverse family, work, leisure, and other interest groups contributing to this shaping process. The combination of a person's own bodily energies, society's guidance, and the economic-political circumstances of the day, is captured in the widespread stress on the bio-cultural nature of emotions that covers a broad spectrum of feeling. Just

[1] While Max Weber used the notion of *habitus* almost in passing to describe both ordinary bodily behaviour and that 'personality pattern' desired by specific religious traditions (1966: 158–9), and while Marcel Mauss's 'Techniques of the body' sketched *habitus* as culturally learned modes of everyday activities (1979 [1935]: 101), it was Pierre Bourdieu who most skilfully described and theoretically accounted for *habitus* as 'internalized embodied schemes … constituted in the course of collective history … acquired in the course of individual history', and which function in ordinary practical life (Bourdieu 1984: 467). See also Bourdieu (1977). As for *gestus,* or gesture in its English expression, this concept gained some academic status when both Talal Asad (1988) and Tyson, Peacock, and Patterson (1988) independently focused on behavioural acts embedded in ritual performance where 'meanings unique to the person' overlap with 'meanings commonly shared by the group' (Tyson et al. 1988: 5). I have explored these approaches in some detail for Mormonism and its embodied and emotional life (Davies 2000: 107–38).

how groups name their emotional spectrum, and how psychologists in particular range emotions as primary, secondary, and the like, vary to some degree (Goldschmidt 1990). Many questions remain as to whether, for example, 'love' can be an emotion analogous to disgust, surprise, or fear. Much depends upon context and tradition. Issues of identity and emotion have held varying significance during periods of creative endeavour, applied interpretation, and crises of purpose experienced in the still young discipline of anthropology, as evidenced in the following selection of anthropologically inclined thinkers.

Anthropological Perspectives

The following scholars, both familiar and less well known, are discussed in historical sequence except when the alignment of ideas demands inclusion of others. Key figures include Tylor, Robertson Smith, Durkheim, Hertz, Malinowski, van Gennep, Hocart, Stanner, de Martino, Richards, La Fontaine, Turner, Douglas, Mol, Bloch, and Parry, with complements from Weber, Gluckman, Marriot, Miller, Toulis, and some others.

Tylor: Sacrifice as Gift-Giving

E. B. Tylor's magisterial *Primitive Culture* remains highly instructive for our topics, notably his penultimate chapter on 'Rites and Ceremonies' (1871: 328–400). There, the terms 'rites' and 'ceremonies' predominate with 'ritual' occurring but rarely, as in 'the ritual' denoting developed Christian liturgy, or when 'systematic ritual' describes a certain consolidation of practices (1871: 371, 384). For Tylor is certainly interested in the historical development and transformation of ceremonial as exemplified in the burial of the dead with an orientation of the feet towards the east, something he traces from the 'ancient Greeks', through the burial of Christ, to sixteenth-century ecclesiastical instruction, and on to contemporary Christianity (1871: 383). Similarly, with sacrificial behaviour, he describes the 'transmutation' of pre-Christian sacrificial acts into the sacrifice-grounded 'solemn eucharistic meal' (1871: 371). He then comes to a 'natural conclusion of an ethnographic survey of sacrifice' in the Reformation 'controversy between Protestants and Catholics' over whether 'sacrifice is or is not a Christian rite' (1871: 371). As for his own theoretical approach to sacrifice, Tylor links gift-giving with 'homage' in what he explicitly calls 'abnegation-theory' where persons acknowledge their own subservient status before the exalted nature of their deity (1871: 350–9). Here, it is interesting to see Tylor not only speak explicitly of 'theory' in connection with abnegation, but also to see how he incorporates emotional ideas into his study by referring to the difficulty he senses, and assumes his readers also experience, when 'not finding it easy to analyse the impressions which a gift makes on our own feelings'. He certainly sees

a value in 'taking our own feelings again for a guide' in order to 'enter into the feelings of' particular groups' (1871: 357, 359).

Robertson Smith and Durkheim: Ritual as a Source of Social Bonding

While Tylor (1832–1917) was beginning to establish anthropology as a fledgling academic discipline, Robertson Smith (1846–1894) was increasingly using ethnographic information and the driving potential of evolutionary thought for his biblical and Semitic studies that came to one sharp focus in the ritual of sacrifice. As the most influential thinker of the closing decades of the nineteenth century, his lectures on *The Religion of the Semites* (1889) deeply influenced both Émile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud's psychology of sacrifice in terms of community cohesion and human self-expression. For Smith, as for Tylor, emotion played a significant role in ritual behaviour, but with an increased affirmation of ritual undergirding a community's sense of identity. In a passage presaging two later thinkers, namely, sociologist Max Weber with his use of the notion of *habitus* and religious mood, and today's anthropologist Dan Miller with his 'aesthetic' of people's lives (Miller 2008), Robertson Smith speaks of 'the kind of religion which finds its proper expression in the merry sacrificial feast', one that implies 'a habit of mind, a way of taking the world' and of 'regarding the gods' that 'we have some difficulty in realising' (Smith 1889: 257). Here 'religion is not the child of terror' but touches on a 'joyous confidence' of people 'in their god, untroubled by … guilt. Devotees and deity are good friends, united by bonds that are not easily broken; they are "commensals" ' (1889: 255, 268). Here in 'antique religion' Smith found 'no room for abiding sense of sin … or acts of worship that express the struggle after an unattained righteousness', but rather a certain 'brightness and hilarity' in worship, along with a 'spirit of absolute confidence' (1889: 256, 257, 263).

From his textual studies he pinpoints 'blood' as 'a special seat of life' with the flesh and blood of sacrifices fostering 'civil virtues of loyalty and devotion to a man's fellows' (Smith 1889: 233, 267). In language that soon appealed to Durkheim, he described ritual experience as a 'cement' creating a 'living bond' between people (1889: 313). Notably in terms of the corpse and death ritual, Smith's concern with emotion and identity adopted another pragmatic theoretical idiom depicting sanctity as a 'polar force' that 'both attracts and repels' (1889: 370 n.1). Properly conducted funeral rites ensure that the corpse can no longer 'be a source of danger to the living' but rather of blessing (1889: 370). Blessing belongs to active participation in society. Drawing on his interest in comparative studies of religion, Smith deals with the notions of 'taboo' and of the 'unclean' in a way that makes it obvious why Mary Douglas would later deem Robertson Smith to be the father of social anthropology. For he develops the clear argument that 'ritual purity' has 'nothing to do with physical cleanliness … [but] removes a taboo and enables the person purified to mingle freely in the ordinary life of his fellows' (1889: 153, 259, 425). This redirection of emphasis from the hygienic to symbolic model of interpretation would be enhanced in Douglas's approach to cultural classification (Douglas 1966;

1970). In Smith's emotion-pervaded theory of ritual behaviour, the notion of 'force' is used not only in general terms (1889: 25, 64, 76, 400–1) but is also likened to 'electricity' (1889: 151), and is, furthermore, discerned in the 'force of custom' (1889: 256).

Finally, it is worth noting that what later theorists would call a bio-cultural view of emotions and identity is germinally present in Smith for, although the theme of emotions is evident in his work, his prime emphasis lies with tradition or social convention. As he says, 'Natural signs of mourning must not be postulated lightly: in all such matters habit is a second nature' (1889: 336); for him, there was due 'reason to be chary in assuming that certain acts are natural expressions of sorrow … lamentation for the dead' (1889: 433). This, too, would be echoed in Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* where the domain of emotions as publicly manifest by individuals involves clear social regulation as at times of ritualized mourning (1915: 400). Just as Robertson Smith's notion of 'the holy and the common' underlaid his approach to experiential aspects of religion (1889: 140), so did Durkheim's development of it as the sacred and the profane mark the nature of ritual and its use of sacred objects (1915: 38–42). Durkheim's transformed version of Smith's emphasis on ritual became much better known in twentieth-century social science as, for example, in Marvin and Ingle's (1999) analysis of military and presidential rituals in the USA, notably in seeing the military death of young Americans as its own form of nation-integrating sacrifice.

Hertz: Death Rites and Emotions

It was, however, in Durkheim's nephew Robert Hertz (1881–1915) that the interplay of emotion with cultural practice found a theoretical focus through his analysis of death rites (Hertz 1960). His notion of 'double burial' described how the living separated the life-time identity of a corpse from its new post-mortem identity. In what would, decades later, be called the anthropology of emotions (for example, Milton and Svašek 2005), he drew on accounts of Indonesian life to consider the emotions felt, for example, towards a corpse or towards cremated remains. He saw how negative feelings of repulsion could turn into a more reverent sense of confidence, and how the decay of the body paralleled what would now be seen as shifts in experiences of grief. The flux of change and decay was transformed into a new sense of social and psychological order. Whether or not influenced by pre-existing Christian idioms, he could, when accounting for transformative death rites, speak of evil energies and of bodies becoming glorified. Though forgotten for some time (Parkin 1996: 87–122), his ideas influenced studies of modern UK cremation practices and theology (Davies 1990; 1995), US death rites (Huntington and Metcalf 1979; Grimes 2000: 259–61), and various anthropological ethnographies, notably by Maurice Bloch on Madagascan double burial (1971) and Jonathan Parry on traditional Indian funerary rites (1994). Together they have also fostered the study of the interplay of mortality with vitality, a theme of deep import for Christianity (Bloch and Parry 1982).

Van Gennep, Turner, Bloch, and Whitehouse: The Power of Emotion in Rites of Passage and the Modes of Religion

In a view of society quite familiar to Hertz, Arnold van Gennep (1873–1957) also saw the force of funerary rites as part of his analysis of ritual transition in social status. His narrative depiction of how a person may be conducted from one status to another through an intervening liminal period, along with its pre-liminal and post-liminal periods, has gained near universal currency in the notion of rites of passage that inevitably help explain the idea of identity (van Gennep 1960). Subsequently, two major developments of that perspective came with Victor Turner's elaboration of forms of liminality (from Latin *limen* or threshold) and, especially, of the communal sense of shared identity or *communitas* brought about during liminal periods (Turner 1969). Maurice Bloch brought yet more emotional aspects of existential changes to bear on status change in his theory of rebounding violence or rebounding conquest with its idea that a person's experience of a new status might lead to a self-appraisal that could create active opposition to what had pre-existed it (Bloch 1992). Moreover, he did much to draw attention to both the 'emotional and political power' of rituals while also noting the importance of attempting 'to study particular meaning and general significance simultaneously' (Bloch 1987: 272). Indeed, this double concern with the particular and the general stands as a crucial factor within theories of ritual.

In a broadly similar tradition, and allied with the power of emotion in ritual, lies Harvey Whitehouse's two modes theory of religion that distinguished between the 'doctrinal' and 'imagistic' modes of religiosity (Whitehouse 2004). These involve their own patterns of ritual with the former corresponding to formal learning and teaching of large groups and their capacity for sharing their learned knowledge in, for example, evangelism. The latter, by sharp contrast, involves much smaller groups of people undergoing often painful initiation rites that seemed to create very powerful bonds and sharing of identity between people, not least in pre-literate cultural settings, generating that kind of experience that is, practically speaking, impossible to share in an evangelistic or doctrine-teaching sense with others (Whitehouse 1995). In some ways such experiences may be likened to forms of trauma, which some have shared together but do not or cannot share with others who have not undergone the traumatic circumstances. Many who have survived extreme privation have often not 'talked about it', as witnessed for thousands after the First World War, or many Jews who suffered in Nazi concentration camps during the Second.

Chapple and Coon: Rites of Intensification

Though much more in line with the milder 'doctrinal' than the traumatic 'imagistic' mode of ritual learning, Chapple and Coon suggested the notion of rites of

intensification to describe frequent forms of ritual action that reinforce people in their espoused cultural values (Chapple and Coon 1947). This 'intensification' motif was developed by Douglas Davies (2008) as a 'theory for religion' to account for how people engage in daily, weekly, or constant forms of ritualized activity such as personal prayer. This offers considerable scope for anthropological study of ritual, both in its collective form and in personal and private forms of rite that draw on and feed into collective behaviour as in Jon Davies's study of British war memorials as foci of ritual remembrance of the military dead (Davies 1995). While the Durkheimian tradition stressed that collective dimension and its capacity to enhance emotion, it is, today, all the more necessary to note the way a person may, for example, use online resources during private devotional rites (Campbell 2010). Public and private aspects of ritual now possess new opportunities for emotion and identity, including grief and bereavement, to be played out in increasingly widespread arenas (Hutchings 2013).

Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, and Lienhardt: Fieldwork and Ritual Diversity

At this point we need to retrace our theoretical steps from today's online domain back to the fieldwork setting of Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942), whose early twentieth-century theoretical pioneering of functionalism linked the patterned integration of social institutions with sustaining rituals that answer human needs. The emotional dynamics in his work touch such daily needs, with fear and anxiety being key features associated with risky human activity. Though more inclined to speak of 'social ideas' as 'embodied in institutions or traditional texts' rather than in persons or bodies as such (Malinowski 1973 [1948]: 245), Malinowski certainly accords emotion a highly significant role, notably in what he describes as 'the religious act par excellence, the ceremonial of death' with his essay 'Magic, Science and Religion', for example, furnishing an extended account of 'ritual acts and beliefs' that help 'bridge the gaps in difficult situations' (1973 [1948]: 80, 90). The developing anthropological commitment to fieldwork provided much opportunity for encountering the feelings of others and for considering the complexity of ritual and its aligned symbolic thought as in Evans-Pritchard's magisterial account of Azande witchcraft and oracles (1937) or in ritual-symbolism among the cattle-herding Nuer (Evans-Pritchard 1956). In these contexts we see how ritual in a variety of forms not only deals with issues of life's hardship, local justice, ethics, and decision-making, but also reveals a certain proclivity for creativity in poetic and metaphorical play. Lienhardt's ethnography of the Dinka explores just such powers of language in ritual invocation, as well as local variation and different degrees of participation in ritual events by local folk (Lienhardt 1961). In contemporary western contexts too, analyses have shown how 'bystanders, spectators, invited guests' as well as 'outside witnesses and beneficiaries' may be involved in ritual activities and experience them in differing ways (Baumann 1992). This offers its own corrective to my own emphasis on core cultural values and assumptions of a rather unified group context implicit in this

chapter, and to the implicit anthropological presumption that 'ritual' is some idealized, normative, and inerrant activity. More recent theoretical work has focused quite precisely on the notion of ritual 'going wrong' (McClymond 2016), and we return to this possibility in the third section.

Richards, La Fontaine, and Douglas: Women and Ritual

Meanwhile, we remain with the interplay of emotion, identity, and ritual aligned not only with a Malinowski-like functionalism but also by theories favouring symbolic, and partly structuralist, analyses of ritual as evident in one of Malinowski's students, Audrey Richards. She represents numerous women anthropologists who have made significant contributions to the study of ritual. Her emphasis on 'the emotional atmosphere that accompanied different stages of rituals' was, for example, emphasized by Jean La Fontaine whose own observations include incisive insights on how 'ritual expresses cultural values', not least 'as part of a non-verbal communication system of communication' (1972: xv–xvii). Precise definitions of 'ritual' were, however, not easy for La Fontaine, as evident in the way she distinguished between 'ceremonial' and 'ritual' in forms of behaviour aligned with three major female life-change contexts in Gisu society, namely, menstruation, marriage, and first childbirth. Though she uses the idiom of rites of passage for these, she saw the point of Max Gluckman's use of 'ceremonial' as a way of describing 'any complex organisation of human activity which is not specifically technical or recreational' but whose organization of behaviour is 'expressive of social relationships' (La Fontaine 1972: 160, citing Gluckman 1962: 22). La Fontaine saw the possibility of describing menstruation and first childbirth as 'ceremonial' were it not for the fact that some 'mystical notions' were involved in them, albeit not as forcefully as in the marriage rite. Here degrees of complexity of symbolic behaviour along with some explicit engagement with 'religious elements'—she cites both Christian tradition and offerings to ancestors—contribute to 'ritual' behaviour. Her key caveat for much anthropological analysis lies in the reminder that 'technical' behaviour, as in the making of things, as well as 'ceremonial' and 'ritual' acts 'are arbitrary distinctions among phenomena that are themselves not always easily classified' (La Fontaine 1972: 161).

Alongside this cautionary approach to social roles and status changes La Fontaine not only marks the individual as a 'focus of a unique set' of relations but also highlights the human body as the site of that set's physical manifestation (La Fontaine 1972: 163). Fully alert both to Mary Douglas's highly influential work in *Purity and Danger* (1966) and *Natural Symbols* (1970), and to Lévi-Strauss's structuralist approach to the interplay of 'nature' and 'culture', she also critically observed Victor Turner's use of her own doctoral research. Still, La Fontaine retained a certain looseness of imposed classification, evident when describing the Gisu view of a 'creative power that is *sui generis* natural' in women and over which male control is increasingly expressed, notably in the marriage ritual. She also thinks that the Gisu male circumcision ritual is an attempt at 'a symbolic creation in men of the inherent physical power of women' (La Fontaine 1972: 179–80).

These gender-linked factors need more than the emphasis I have given them here because discussions of ritual sometimes ignore them when theoretical issues become overly abstract and simplified in the process.

Hocart and Stanner: Ritual De-reified

Again, a slight retracing of historical steps takes us to Hocart (1883–1939), a contemporary of Malinowski, and a figure favoured by Evans-Pritchard. Hocart's suggestive essay on 'The Purpose of Ritual', grasped the dynamic import of ritual as a means 'to promote life' or of 'securing life' (Hocart 1969: 46–62). While such a fostering function of ritual obviously embraced the emotional desire to survive and flourish, Hocart was keen to analyse both rational-intellectual drivers of formal behaviour and the emotionally demonstrative passions, whether of some social class or sect-like group. Significantly, his essay 'Ritual and Emotion' sought to avoid any 'talk of ritual as if it were a thing in itself', preferring to think in terms of 'chains of action which can vary infinitely' (1969: 64).

This is an important theoretical point given the potential error of ritual studies to reify 'ritual', isolating 'ritual' behaviour from the hundred and one aspects of ordinary life whose weave and weft it is the task of anthropology to describe and interpret. Here Marcel Mauss's 'vague but suggestive concept' of 'the total social fact' (Goffman 1998) offers an apt corrective for use in many areas, highlighting the overall complexity of social life out of which moments or periods of 'ritual' behaviour may arise and from which they gain their distinctive significance. Chang-Won Park's demonstration of how some contemporary Korean Christians engage in bible-copying as a ritual before death, in funerary rites as ritual at death, and in ancestral rites as ritual after death offers one clear example (Park 2010). So too does Sharma's (2013) recent account of Christian identity and funerary rites in contemporary Nepal, while Parry's (1994) work on Indian cremation set amidst a totality of cultural life is magisterial. In citing Mauss, Park recalls his foundational significance in identifying rituals of reciprocity as a means of understanding social and religious life. His 'gift theory' greatly helps interpret behaviour surrounding such reciprocal and 'salvation-related' phenomena as merit-making in Indian and Semitic traditions and, notably, in Eucharistic theology (Davies 2002), issues to which we return in the third section of this chapter that will pick up the fostering of life theme.

Another relatively ignored anthropologist of ritual is W. E. H. Stanner (1905–1981), a doctoral student of Malinowski, who was also deeply alert to human needs. As I have shown elsewhere, Stanner's approach to ritual life presents an anthropological perspective that merges more private and public as well as social and philosophical-theological domains (Stanner 1959a; 1959b). He links descriptive phenomenology with ethnography to disclose that spectrum of human meaning-making that shades into notions of what theology and the history of religions might call 'salvation' (Davies 1984a). Stanner's ethnography among the Australian Murinbata, including the *punj* rite of male initiation, clearly describes contexts of emotional experience

that evoke a sense of the present in which comfort and refuge are aligned. Through the motifs of 'nest' and 'wallow', initiates are in a position to gain an 'intuition of an integral moral flaw in human association', becoming aware of the 'refuge and rottenness' of existence, a 'covenant of duality' into which a new generation is exposed to life's realities (Stanner 1960: 106). To speak of intuition is important for our approach to emotion, identity, and ritual for it highlights the creatively imaginative powers of human perception in sensing one's self in one's given social world. Intuition also carries with it the individual capacity to form a personal, even an idiosyncratic, grasp of the way things are. Stanner aptly discusses that wider world that encompasses individuals yet in which all share to some degree. He speaks of that 'perennial good-with-suffering, of order-with-tragedy' that could, certainly, be identified in most life contexts irrespective of their being framed as religious, spiritual, secular, or whatever (Stanner 1960: 110).

De Martino: Rituals and Well-being

One contemporary of Stanner, the Italian scholar, Ernesto de Martino (1908–1965), separately developed an anthropological perspective concerned with human well-being enhanced by ritual by dealing with human attempts at ameliorating a sense of life's inadequate instability through notions of 'presence' and 'crisis of presence'. 'Presence' denoted human life-making sense while poised on the cusp of potential uncertainty, with 'crisis of presence' describing slips into chaos, and with ritual, as Ferrari describes it, dealing with 'the negative' to 'normalize it' (2012: 92). De Martino, whose influential Italian ethnographic studies have gained but little purchase in the Anglophone world, began life as a philosopher who, as with some late nineteenth-century British classicists such as Cambridge academic J. G. Frazer, and Durham's F. B. Jevons, developed strong anthropological interests. One valuable application of his approach led Nicole Toulis in her study of Jamaican women immigrants to Britain and their ritual participation in Pentecostal church life that progressively developed their emotional awareness and sense of identity amidst many personal hardships (Toulis 1997). Her accounts of church ceremonies as a means of intensifying an ongoing sense of personal control in life provide a valuable corrective to easy assumptions that rites rapidly change a person's sense of identity, as in some theories of evangelical conversion (Davies 2011: 222–5).

Mol: The Sacralization of Identity

Issues of power and personal integrity amidst hardship also emerge in scholars' lives as much as in the lives they study. So it was for sociologist and Dutch Protestant, Hans Mol who, in the same way that de Martino had to hide from Gestapo pursuit in Italy's political turmoil in 1943, also found himself arrested and imprisoned in Holland that

year. If imprisonment be considered its own form of political 'ritual', as with judicial trials and, notably, with Death Row's capital punishment in the USA (Kohn 2012), so too for Mol's transformed sense of himself (Powell 2015: 15). Further changes brought Mol to sociology in the USA and, later, to his own theory of religion as 'the sacralization of identity' (Mol 1976: 1). What we can take from this is the idea that when ritual participation in a religious community is such as to engender and foster an identity within devotees, then that identity has been 'sacralized', i.e. has come to be regarded as special and placed beyond contradiction. This intriguing approach proposes an interactive process in which things that confer this sense of identity are reciprocally invested with high status: identity-conferring factors are deemed sacred by the identity-gained devotee. Something similar might be said for the degree of impact of a rite on participants' implication in a ritual (Quartier 2007).

Mol's theory carries potentially profound consequences for the identity of early Christian groups and the rise of the idea of Jesus as divine or of the church as the 'body of Christ'. Much the same could be said for Gautama as the Buddha, Muhammad as Islam's prophet, or for Mormonism's first prophet, Joseph Smith Jnr. The phenomena generating emotions underlying identity formation are accorded high consideration, praise, and even devotion, and do so through ritual that intensifies each in terms of the other. The Christian Eucharist, for example, intensifies the believer's sense of identity and is, as part of that process, itself viewed with increasing significance. Such rites frequently frame and assert in ritual-symbolic behaviour what Roy Rappaport's magisterial account of *Ritual in the Making of Humanity* designates as the 'ultimate sacred postulates' of a tradition (1999: 263–5). Such affirmative utterances would include 'Jesus is Lord', or 'the Body of Christ', these accord respect to the source of identity by those to whom they accord identity, and they are, most usually, emotion-pervaded and serve as beliefs or religious beliefs.

Weber: Daily Life as Ritual

One historical case of the sacralization of identity in relation to emotion and religion is Max Weber's famed though disputed notion of the Protestant Ethic (1976 [1904–1905]). I include this to broaden the notion of 'ritual', for while not focused on specific 'ritual', he argued that ideological drivers can foster daily life, with Calvinistic doctrines of predestination constituting a doctrinal concept framing religious identity. The devotee's careful management of life, often yielding a flourishing economy, might indicate God's blessing and indirectly imply a status of one predestined to eternal life despite the essentially 'secret' nature of that divine information. Such life-management entailed both church-framed religious devotion and emotional control in world-based business-life. We could then argue that daily life becomes its own ritual form, albeit aligned with ecclesial ritual. My own account of the 'Charismatic Ethic and the Spirit of Post-Industrialism' echoed Weber in seeking a similar affinity, albeit between fellowship-based charismatic religiosity and life in service-based but increasingly depersonalized society (Davies 1984b).

In other words, contexts alert us to potential and actual affinities between lifestyle and ecclesial cultural style and their complementarity of emotion and identity.

Exploratory Applications

While involving further theoretical work, this final section adopts a more analytical approach than was the case in the descriptive account of theories in the previous sections of the chapter. Here two major theoretical themes fundamental to any approach to new religious movements are brought together, namely, personhood and reciprocity, with a strong emphasis placed on personhood and a brief and nuanced approach to reciprocity, not only in terms of commensality but also as betrayal. This brief consideration of personhood alongside several preoccupations of early Christian biblical texts will serve as its own example of how anthropological theories of ritual continue to develop and offer interpretative choice when seeking to explore, at some historical distance, hints of how early Christian groups might have operated. Echoing this chapter's Introduction, I first re-examine the notion of the 'individual-society' bond through the theoretical idea that if 'personhood' be reconceived as 'dividual' (see below) and not 'individual', then a different perspective on ritual behaviour is made possible, and, second, this will also apply to the symbolic role of ritualized reciprocity.

Dividual Persons and Substance Codes

We could take our cue on personhood from many sources, including the influential ritual studies scholar, Ronald Grimes, who, for example, criticizes the 'individualist value' underlying a certain 'initiatory fantasy' driving some North American desires for individualized ritual, something he sees as potentially 'deadly' (Grimes 2000: 115–16). Our chosen focus, however, falls on an earlier yet complementary insight of anthropologist McKim Marriott's (1976) notion of personhood's 'dividuality'. Marriott's view has, for example, also been developed in anthropology by Marylin Strathern (1988) and in archaeology by Chris Fowler (2004).

Marriott's original work on Indian material, as with Strathern on Melanesia, depicted persons as complex centres of interaction with other persons and with their material and cultural environment. Though, indirectly, reflecting Durkheim's key notion of *Homo duplex*, the binding of social and 'individual' factors, Marriott goes further (Davies 2002: 28–32, 47). His Hindu-based context led him to develop the significant theoretical concept of 'substance-codes' to describe such phenomena as 'parentage, marriage, trade, payments, alms, feasts', as well as 'words' and 'appearances', while not ignoring food, cooking, and caste. For him, 'dividual persons' are described as 'composites of various substance-codes', many of whose elements involve their own ritual episodes (Marriott 1976: 114). Strathern's ethnography of Melanesians similarly construes

'persons' as 'frequently constructed as the plural and composite site of the relationships that produced them' (1988: 13). Hess followed Strathern's interpretation of 'Melanesian persons' being 'as dividually as they are individually conceived'. They contain a generalized sociality within (2006: 285, citing Strathern 1988: 13). While the theoretical implications of this perspective are potentially very extensive for such issues as death, memories, and grief, the following brief sketch pinpoints issues of embodiment, identity, and group membership potentially useful for New Testament texts more strictly focused on the idiom of 'dividuality'.

Potential New Testament Application

In terms of early Christianity, this dividual approach might interpret Paul's self-reflection on mind-renewal as integral to his own shift to Christian identity and its embracing community (Eph. 4:23, 25). In Marriott's terms, we might identify the substance-code of Christian identity as involving speaking the truth and not lying, of 'spirit' replacing 'blood', and of the dividuality for marital partners and for Christ and the church (Eph. 5:18, 21–33). Furthermore, dividuality offers a means of analysing the idea of 'the body of Christ' (1 Cor. 12:27), an idiom whose basis perhaps lay in the emotion generated through corporate assembly, worship, and commensality. The act of eating bread and drinking wine, which seems to have assumed a ritual-like form, provides a substance-code evident not only in genuine rites of togetherness (1 Cor. 11:17–22), but also in the paradigmatic scene of the night of the Lord's supper with his immediate disciples, including its stark references to his body and blood (1 Cor. 11:24–5).

These substance-codes are, presumably, both textually and thematically allied to what might well be another, albeit counter-intuitive, substance-code, that of betrayal. For amidst these narrative-like exhortations Paul refers to that night of paradigmatic shared eating as also the night of betrayal (1 Cor. 11:23). To approach these texts in the context of the 'coming together' and to interpret them dividualistically is to see that betrayal ruptures the very nature of the substance-code's symbols of shared existence. And this remains the case even if 'betrayal' is interpreted as Jesus being 'handed over' to his enemies. Indeed, surrounding texts are replete with ideas of receiving and giving as is also the case in other key descriptors of dividual Christian identity (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 13).

Moreover, whether in betrayal or friendship-rupture, it seems that Paul's stated apostolic self-identity is similarly framed when he reckons to be the least among the apostles and unfit to be one, having persecuted the church (Eph. 3:8; 1 Cor. 15:9). Is he, perhaps, all too alert to Judas and Peter's betrayal (Luke 22:47–62), and perhaps to the flight of the disciples (Mark 14:50), a theme that might even have echoes in the sleep of the disciples at the time of Christ's great anguish (Matt. 26:36–46)? Is betrayal, in its own distinctive fashion, and through these apparently diverse forms, open to interpretation as a negatively valued, yet prized, behaviour, perhaps its own ritual form, given that it was a prelude to emotional experiences of grace? It certainly took its own ritual form, for example, in both medieval monastic Durham and in a recently revised Anglican

liturgical form—the Judas Cup Ceremony—formulated as such for use on Maundy Thursday (Davies 2000: 74–6; *pace* Grimes 2000: 116). Moreover, for over four hundred years, direct reference to 'the same night that he was betrayed' lay at the heart of the Holy Communion rite in the Church of England's Book of Common Prayer. Certainly, betrayal allows both Peter and Paul to experience the other key substance-code elements of forgiveness and grace, and to allow love to become the prized form of behaviour. Paul's claim to leadership status lies not only in having 'persecuted' and raged against Christians, but also in having 'received from the Lord' a sense of the significance of 'the Lord's body', with a strong reference to the night on which Christ was betrayed (1 Cor. 15:1–11).

Other potential bases for the substance-codes of dividual Christian ritual and identity that can only be intimated here would include conversion, whether in Peter, Paul, or disciples at large on the Day of Pentecost, and in preaching and giving testimony. These codes and the framing notion of dividuality could be further explored in terms of Bloch's rebounding conquest theory, as Jewish converts set out to convert Jews: their new identity seeking to transform their old identity with all the complexity involved within dividual Jewish personhood en route to Jewish-Christian dividual personhood. Similarly, Whitehouse's emotion-linked 'two modes' theory of religion carries relevance for such practices as letter-writing, teaching, and exhortation, framed as a ritualized form of pastoring the emergent Christian community's lifestyle, complemented by the 'trauma' of Pentecost or of Peter and Paul's hostile experiences of apostleship that made 'grace' all the more telling, given their times of 'betrayal'.

Conclusion

Inspired but also chastened by the often forgotten British anthropologist of Oceania, A. M. Hocart, who sensibly argued that 'endless classifications, definitions, and distinctions' are the 'curse of human studies' because 'almost every single fact has become a category in itself' (Hocart 1969 [1935]: 156), this chapter has adopted a largely descriptive stance to selected scholars' views of ritual while trying to ensure that ritual studies is better served by contextualized perspectives than by forcing its status as a discrete category. Anthropologically speaking, highly focused behaviour that intensifies core cultural values always needs contextualizing in broader social, economic, political, philosophical, and theological aspects of community life. Our earlier reference to Weber's Protestant Ethic and its anticipated sacralized self exemplifies just such complexity of identity and its networked field of ecclesial and 'secular' engagement. The quandaries of human life can, of course, always be approached from quite different directions, whether beginning with traditions rooted in Descartes' method of philosophical doubt ending in his foundational 'I think therefore I am', or even Johan Huizinga's (1949) approach to culture as 'play'. Just which theoretical perspective to adopt when, for example, engaging with early Christian ritual life will always remain a challenge.

Meanwhile, this chapter has contented itself with sketching some significant anthropological approaches to emotion, identity, and religion, always recalling that people's hopes, fears, dilemmas, depressions, and excitements and desire to survive and even to flourish lie behind all theorizing.

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CHAPTER 5

RITUAL AND EMBODIED COGNITION

EVA KUNDTOVÁ KLOCOVÁ AND ARMIN W. GEERTZ

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the growing empirical knowledge about the interaction between bodily actions and human thinking and about the cultural embeddedness of human cognition. Findings in the field of embodied cognition have great potential relevance for the study of ritual. An approach to ritual based on an expanded view of cognition produces important perspectives and insights for the study of ancient religions.

The brain, body, and mind are often erroneously thought to be more or less independent organs. They are, however, enmeshed not only internally but also externally in a vast network of other brains, bodies, and minds stretching across the planet and back to the beginnings of time. Humans are particularly social creatures. Language is a crucial social glue, but so are the senses, emotions, memories, and movements. Our bodies move unnoticed by us in cadence, sometimes in and sometimes out of synch. Our nervous systems are peculiarly vulnerable to influence from conspecifics. In fact, our brains thrive on this influence, and our minds try to make sense of it, mostly after the fact. A lot of what we do as social creatures, in groups or alone, has been automatically taken care of by the embodied brain. Thus, mental representations, mental and emotional states, unconscious reactions, and background emotions are socially oriented and often socially caused states. We are biocultural creatures, simultaneously vulnerable and resilient.

This is where religious behaviour comes in. Through the millennia, many have noticed our abilities, weaknesses, and strengths as cognizing, emotional creatures. Specialists and leaders can consciously or unconsciously manipulate our nervous and mental systems. Techniques have evolved to create particular emotional, mental, and spiritual states. And yet this fundamental fact has been systematically ignored in the study of religion. Scholars have been too concerned with the written and spoken products of religious thinkers and writers. Such mundane matters as fasting, intense

meditation, violent body techniques, and the use of stimulants have been studied by a minor group of scholars, many of whom have tried these techniques on themselves. What is needed is a systematic, scientific study of brain, body, and behaviour in religious rituals. This chapter will sketch out some of the theories and current available evidence.

Research on the Body, Mind, and Culture

Since ancient times, philosophers, religious thinkers, and scholars have pondered the relations between mind, body, and culture, often reaching mutually incompatible conclusions. A tendency in both Western philosophy and Abrahamic religions was to conceive of the mind (and/or soul) and the body as two separate, sometimes hostile entities vying for dominance in human life. Note, however, that dualisms and abhorrences of the body are also found in Eastern traditions. The dualism between mind and body came to fruition in the work of the Enlightenment philosopher, René Descartes. He argued that the mind and body are distinct substances. The Cartesian legacy has influenced much of Western science, but philosophers have also countered dualism with monism (for instance, Benedict de Spinoza), a tendency that was carried on by phenomenologists such as Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The latter, together with the philosopher, Michel Foucault, and the sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, have had a considerable influence on the critique of Cartesian dualism among anthropologists, feminist scholars, literature scholars, and religious studies scholars (see Csordas 2011, for a discussion on phenomenology and embodiment).

These scholars, however, have had difficulties in dealing with the naturalism of the cognitive sciences (Zahavi 2004; Wheeler 2013). Cartesian dualism has also plagued cognitive science from the beginning. For methodological reasons, cognitivists and cognitive philosophers have consistently assumed that cognition is strictly mental and disembodied. Neuroscientists have tried to avoid this problem by arguing that the mind is the brain, and cognition consists of neural computations. As psychologist Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr., has argued, this methodological ploy is more epistemological than solely methodological, based as it is on the conceived nature of cognition (2005: 5). Fortunately, this assumption is being replaced by new advances in neuropsychology (Kelso 1995; Gallagher 2005).

We argue that although mental representations have their role in cognition, the embrainedness and embodiedness of cognition are much more fundamental. By this is meant the foundational fact that the mind and brain are one and the same and that both are firmly anchored in the body, with all that it entails (Geertz 2010). The brain functions as a predictive organ that attempts to forecast what is going to happen next. In drawing on predictive coding and resource depletion theories, we argue that input to the senses is both chaotic and underdetermined, with the result that the embodied brain fills in

needed information (Frith 2007; Barsalou 2009; Schjoedt et al. 2013a; 2013b). This information comes by default, from prior experience, and from cultural, social, and religious values. Thus, the link to religious thought and behaviour becomes paramount in an embodiment approach. The concept of a disembodied, culture-less, cognitive creature is not supported by the evidence.

An Embodied Approach

Embodied cognition theory arose from diverse disciplines (psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, and robotics) often in direct opposition to classical or computationalist positions in cognitive science. Most of its seminal studies are for this reason focused on distinguishing themselves from the classical approach. The classical cognitivist approach sees the mind as a computing machine or computational processor (see Anderson 2003). Many in the embodied cognition camp begin by (implicitly or explicitly) dealing with this metaphor and argue that the human mind and its capacities emerged during a lengthy evolutionary process of blind selection (Anderson 2008; Barrett 2015) subject to the same evolutionary mechanisms and opportunities as all other species. Thus, any 'higher' cognitive function, such as language, is seen, in the words of Tim Rohrer, 'as a well-developed and highly-evolved refinement continuous with the bodily and animal cognition of our past' (2001: 74–5). In this sense, it is relevant to draw attention to Kelso's observation:

> It is important to keep in mind … that the brain did not evolve merely to register representations of the world; rather, it evolved for adaptive actions and behaviors. Musculoskeletal structures coevolved with appropriate brain structures so that the entire unit must function together in an adaptive fashion … [I]t is the entire system of muscles, joints, and proprioceptive and kinesthetic functions and appropriate parts of the brain that evolve and function together in a unitary way. (Kelso 1995: 268; see also Gibbs 2005: 9)

Embodied approaches thus connect cognition with biological processes. Philosopher Timothy van Gelder and linguist Robert F. Port argue in their dynamical approach to cognition that:

> [C]ognitive processes span the brain, the body, and the environment; to understand cognition is to understand the interplay of all three. Inner reasoning processes are no more essentially cognitive than the skillful execution of coordinated movement or the nature of the environment in which cognition takes place. The interaction between the 'inner' processes and 'outer' world is not peripheral to cognition, it is the very stuff of which cognition is made. (van Gelder and Port 1995: ix)

Although body and bodily manipulations have long been understood as an important part of rituals, their role was seen as merely expressive, external formulations or enactments of symbolic meanings and internal mental representations (Hertz 1960; Douglas 1966; Blacking 1977; Lawson and McCauley 1990). We will demonstrate how embodied cognition can help our understanding of religious ritual as well as connecting it to other theoretical approaches. Several studies of ritual behaviour are already beginning to pay more attention to bodily processes and procedures in rituals (see, for instance, Glucklich 2001; Fuller 2008; 2013). Many studies, however, usually consider body technologies to be subsidiaries of larger theoretical frameworks, providing only anecdotal examples of isolated mechanisms. Even though such interest and growing evidence are a step in the right direction, we feel that a more radical paradigmatic shift is needed by which embodied cognition theory 'can serve as a common denominator for social cognition, an analysis of culture, evolution, and language' (Schubert and Semin 2009: 1139) and thus not only help bridge those areas but also provide a solid theoretical and empirical base for an integrated theory of religious ritual.

Even though the embodied cognition approach draws on the growing empirical evidence on the interconnectedness of body and mind, there are as yet no clear unifying theoretical models that explain the evidence. Some authors even assert that such unified theories may never be realized (e.g. Price and Harmon-Jones 2015), arguing there is a whole range of different mechanisms at play. To further complicate matters, there is no consensus on the concept of *embodiment* in its various uses ranging from cultural analysis to neuroscience. To illustrate the range of possible meanings, Tim Rohrer has analysed different definitions, from phenomenology to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's 'cognitive unconscious' to neurophysiological and neurocomputational approaches (Rohrer 2001: 60–2). This diversity is still evident today in the growing literature on cognitive embodiment (Wilson 2002; Willems and Francken 2012; Wilson and Golonka 2013), but it can be argued that this is the healthy sign of a promising and growing field.

Because of this variety of approaches and understandings of embodied cognition, we will use what has been called the 4E position. This position is an evolutionary-based biogenic approach to cognition as *embodied, embedded, extended*, and *enactive*, thus the 4E approach. Embodiment theories have led to the emergence of different subfields (e.g. situated, distributed, or grounded cognition theories), which may under closer scrutiny look too heterogeneous or even incompatible with each other (see Menary 2010). For our purposes, however, we will use the term *embodiment* or *embodied cognition* as an umbrella term, representing various aspects of the field, without further resolving their explanatory and/or methodological differences.

4E Cognition: Embodied, Embedded, Extended, and Enactive

The classical cognitivist view of cognition is sometimes called the 'sandwich model', where cognition, in the words of Roel M. Willems and Jolien C. Francken, is thought

'to be "thinking" as the real stuff … and takes perception and action as separated slave systems, providing input to cognitive processors (perception) and executing its commands (action)' (2012: 1). The embodied cognition approach moves away from this idea by claiming that *cognition is embodied*, in other words, deeply interrelated with sensorimotor action. The embodiedness of cognition does not simply mean that in humans the central nervous system, and particularly the brain, provide the physical underpinnings for the functioning of cognition. The embodiedness assumption is that the whole complex of body systems is what enables cognition to exist as we know it. Cognition in this view is not solely influenced by specific bodily states that became associated with amodal conceptual contents; those bodily states are in fact the core of cognition itself as all bodily processes add to the creation of mental states (Barsalou et al. 2003). Even though the brain plays an important role in the system, to understand it as a sole directing organ would be oversimplifying the matter.

Empirical studies of embodied cognition have helped to show the connections between manipulated bodily states and emotive behaviour, diverse physiological processes related to motivation and emotion, and associated cognitive processes (Price and Harmon-Jones 2015: 461). Embodied cognition is not, however, only about manipulating mental states by direct use of the body, since it does not see the body as a derivative device influencing the mind with the subsequent distinction between 'having a body' and 'being embodied'. Embodiment itself is placed 'at the *center* of the organism's solution to a given task, rather than on the periphery', as Andrew Wilson and Sabrina Golonka emphasize (2013: 10).

Cognition is also understood as *embedded in its surroundings* rather than a detached system, independent from external influences of the environment. Dynamic perception–action coupling or sensorimotor coordination in the context of an environment is understood in embodied cognition as the basis of cognition, thus emphasizing the necessity of taking the environment in which the organism is embedded (or situated) into account (Clark 1997; Lyon 2006). Accepting the dynamics of the surrounding environment as elements of cognition radically extends its study beyond the biological boundaries of the body. Those external elements together with internal processes create 'feedback loops of interactions' or systems 'coupled via channels of mutual perturbations' (Clark 1997; Dautenhahn et al. 2002). Changes in the environment are perceived by the sensorimotor system, the active response to these changes which influences in turn the environment that the agent is embedded in. Actions enabled by this coupling are not merely reflexive responses to inputs, rather they allow the active exploration of the environment (Gibson 1979).

Embodied cognition theory proposes that cognition is also *extended*, in other words, that humans are particularly apt not only in the exploration, but also in the modulation of their environment, creating both physical and immaterial tools that enhance their actions and interactions. Those tools, or what Andy Clark calls 'scaffoldings', are active ingredients of the cognitive process, affecting not only the outcome, but also the form the process takes, thus extending the capacities and scope of human cognition (Clark 2008). These mind-extending tools are typically illustrated with the example of a difficult

multiplication task calculated either by rote or with the aid of pen and paper. Pen and paper are not the only mind-extension in this case; the social and cultural learning of how to write numbers in certain ways to quickly achieve the multiplication result are also important scaffolds enabling an effective operation. Humans have created whole systems and institutions making such scaffoldings effective and accessible. Tool use, social learning, and cultural transmission are the systems most essential to our success in broadening the capabilities of our cognition (Keller and Keller 1996; Tomasello 1999; Wilson 2010; Henrich 2015). There is an ongoing discussion about the specific roles of these systems and their uniqueness in the human species, but there is no doubt that they contribute greatly to human cognition. Psychologist Margaret Wilson argues in evolutionary terms that the flexible control over the body that we gained 'gave rise to the possibility of embodied simulations, which in turn gave rise to the possibility of cognitive retooling', thus making us smarter by allowing us 'to re-engineer our existing cognitive resources in a flexible fashion' (2010: 185). Thus, for example, the invention of writing systems has been shown to change human cognition. Attention and memory recall of different parts of the visual field vary depending on the direction of reading and writing (Chan and Bergen 2005).

In a broader, evolutionary perspective, culture and cultural transmission can be understood as integral to the niche construction process, a process whereby an organism adapts and modifies its environment, usually in a way that increases its survival chances (Odling Smee et al. 2003; see also Bulbulia, Chapter 6 in this volume). Modifications of the environment not only change the selection pressures that humans are exposed to, but also, more radically, create a dynamic cognitive support surpassing specific tool use extensions. In this view, the whole environment works as a supportive scaffolding of mind (Sterelny 2010; see Kundt 2015, for an introduction to evolutionary approaches to religion).

The 4E view of cognition as *enactive* not only reflects the functional explanation of what cognition does, but also reflects assumptions about its evolutionary origins. Some authors argue that a nervous system that enables higher cognitive functions evolved to enable motor behaviour and control of a large, complexly articulated body in space (Trestman 2013; Keijzer 2015). The functionalist premise that cognition is for action is not a new one in psychology, as it can be traced back to William James and was quite prominent in social psychology (Fiske 1992; Schubert and Semin 2009). In this sense, cognition is not primarily about thinking. Rather, it is about interacting in the context of its environment and current situation, thus moving away from the Cartesian 'thinking thing' to Heidegger's 'being in the world' (Anderson 2003). This being in the world is not passively waiting for cues and stimuli, but rather actively transforming one's surroundings as well as oneself.

Action, planning for action, and evaluation of action in more and more complicated patterns are thus seen as the main driving forces behind complex cognitive processes as well as the evolution of intricate nervous systems. Action is not just the primal evolutionary impetus that brought on the emergence of such phenomena, but is also the perpetual source and motivation of cognitive capacities. Action constitutes the foundation of our knowledge, as Ludwig Wittgenstein argued, thus acknowledging the mundane

experiences and interactions with the world, which some view as an important contribution to the enactivist view of cognition and construction of meaning (Moyal-Sharrock 2013; Loughlin 2014).

The enactivist view is thus probably the most anti-representationalist position of the 4E cognition approach, insisting on the constructed rather than represented origins of knowledge. Marieke Rohde argues that enactivism understands knowledge as 'constructed by an agent through its sensorimotor interactions with its environment, co-constructed between and within living species through their meaningful interaction with each other' (2010: 30).

In many ways, the embodied cognition approach can be seen as a successor of both cognitivism, against which it is often defined, and cultural analysis, against which cognitivism is often defined, as a creative source for alternative explanatory and methodological approaches. This double inheritance provides unique bridging opportunities between the two, making way for new theoretical and methodological undertakings in order to better understand (human) cognition (for the similar point, see Uro 2016: 177).

Communication and Embodiment

One area of human cognition that has gained a lot of attention from both cognitivist and cultural analysis approaches is communication. We believe that the theoretical framings and findings in this area are highly relevant for the study of religious ritual. One of the reasons for this is that the embodied approach to religious ritual often focuses on communication and the transmission of knowledge, thus placing ritual among other means of communication. Although this approach does not proclaim ritual actions as specific languages that can be decoded and translated analytically like symbolic anthropology used to understand it, the two phenomena are too close to ignore their similarities.

Language, once viewed as a purely mental activity without any necessary connections to the physical body (e.g. Hauser et al. 2002), is more and more shown to be physically grounded in neural and bodily perception-action and emotion systems. Such systems are in fact important mechanisms of language production, perception, and comprehension (e.g. Glenberg and Gallese 2012). George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's (2003) conceptual metaphor theory demonstrates how language, relying highly on metaphorical expressions, uses sensory experiences as devices to carry emotional, but also highly abstract, thoughts and meanings (see also Boroditsky and Ramscar 2002). This prominent linguistic theory initiated a vigorous search for evidence of linguistic expressions anchored in bodily processes and sensations that are easy to understand through simulations of their effects. The comprehension of metaphorical language is perceptually grounded, and the same neural circuitry that is activated by perceptual cues is also activated by metaphorical phrases that are based on those perceptual cues (Narayanan 1997). Thus, regions shown to be active during listening to textural metaphors (e.g. 'having a *rough* day') are the same regions that are activated in haptic texture-selectivity (Lacey et al. 2012). Metaphorical expressions describing emotional states are often very

literal in replicating behaviour connected with the given emotion. Joy may be expressed literally by jumping, while anger may turn one's face red. Thus, the way we think and talk about emotions reflects the literal interactions of our bodies with the environment.

Even though the study of linguistic devices and metaphor can in many ways be informative to the study of ritual, the embodied approach accentuates the importance of non-linguistic communication. Although humans are very proficient in language use for diverse purposes, due to the late growth of the neocortex that made language use possible, our species spent most of its evolutionary history relying on other systems of communication. Neuropsychologist Merlin Donald has argued that emotional communication was the first language of the hominin line, a language that we share with the great apes, but which we developed even more through our mimetic motor abilities (2001: 262–5, 268).

While it is quite easy to use words to express false information and to deceive, bodily signals are much harder to fake. The burst in neocortex growth was preceded by significant expansions of the brain areas responsible for emotion processing and picking up cues about the affective states of other people. Reading the emotions of others was crucial to our evolved sociality and was thus an ability much older than language use (Turner 2014; Turner et al. 2018). Even though it mostly operates on unconscious levels, this ability is responsible for much of our understanding of the world around us, especially the social world. In fact, even with speech, we still use our mimetic abilities to emphasize messages and signals in a kind of multisensory orchestration of meaning conveyance (Donald 2001: 266–7). Reading emotions also helps us predict other people's actions and intentions, uncovering cheaters, and identifying potential cooperators. 'Actions speak louder than words', argues Richard Sosis, adding in the context of study of religious rituals that 'religious behaviors, badges, and bans are a more reliable means of communicating commitment than spoken promises' (2006: 64).

We are in fact quicker in reading and understanding the semantics of bodily and contextual cues than language forms. Ross Buck described this type of communication as 'spontaneous' and explains that it is 'based upon biologically shared signal systems, nonvoluntary, composed of signs rather than symbols, and nonpropositional'. Those systems include 'facial expressions and gestures, postures, vocalizations (including language prosody), micro-movements, and pheromones' (Buck 2011: 881; see also Shockley et al. 2003; Knoblich et al. 2011).

The Embodied Cognitive Study of Ritual

Diverse bodily manipulations and specialized tools take place, in one way or another, in special places during religious rituals. Rituals are fundamentally actions, so the embodied cognition approach is highly relevant to their study. There is, however, very little

explicit research and theorizing on this fundamental fact. In the following, we will try to show in more depth why we believe this approach is crucial for theories of ritual.

Ritual Is Primarily Action

During rituals, participants do things. What those things are and what their meaning is differ greatly across religious traditions, as well as across levels and traditions of explanation and interpretation. Starting from the bottom up, the first step to take in the study of ritual is its description. To describe a ritual, it is necessary to capture an action, a dynamic system taking place in time and space (both usually highly delineated by rules and traditions). This bottom-up approach is exactly where the embodied cognitive study of ritual begins: looking not at why people are doing things or what the meaning of the whole event at a macro-social level is, but how actions and the manner in which they are performed influence what people are feeling, thinking, and remembering at the moment as well as in subsequent behaviour.

What the body does during ritual, the place where it happens, and the use of external tools are decisive for the experience of ritual participants. One of the areas that begs further exploration is the question of the congruence of action and doctrine, and its effect on religious transmission and change. The permeation of body and mind implies that a congruence of bodily states with verbal content or concepts contained in rituals is possible and that it can induce the effects of the teachings and also enforce proper motivations and/or desired affective states. Consider the differences in prayer practices in different Christian communities. While some see kneeling and a lowered position as the most suitable way to address the deity, others find the upright posture with lifted, opened arms in an up-reaching gesture to be the most proper one. We might hypothesize from an embodiment angle that the former lends an attitude of humility and obedience while the latter might lead to feelings of empowerment, gratitude, joy, and acceptance (see Geertz 2008, on prayer and embodiment).

Conversely, the interaction of bodily experiences and teachings about their theological meaning can boost the effect of the ritual content and lead to its better retention in memory and eventually to a higher transmission rate (see for an example, Uro 2016: 166–7). Cues from bodily states and the environment can also influence interpretations of ambiguous information, thus creating richer knowledge than can be inferred only from explicit, verbal communication in rituals.

Ritual Is Social Interaction and Communication

Rituals take place in social contexts. They are an inherently human social activity, both verbal and non-verbal, that includes communication. Surprisingly, the social activity does not necessarily imply the presence of other people during the ritual. Rather, it is the

believed (and often felt) presence of other agents and beings in the time and place where the ritual occurs that can also create a social experience. An fMRI study conducted at Aarhus University has shown that participants engaged in personal prayers to God used the same brain regions that are active during normal social cognition, i.e. interactive communication with other people (Schjoedt et al. 2009).

Understanding rituals as social situations allows us to draw many helpful insights from another discipline devoted solely to studying human behaviour in social contexts, namely, social psychology. One of the key positions of social psychology is the power of the situation over human behaviour. Thus, an activity is analysed in its contexts and conditions. Social behaviours, Gün Semin and Eliot Smith maintain, 'are not driven by the individual's internal dispositions and desires so much as by detailed aspects of the social situation' (2002: 388). The focus of study for them is not participants' individual motivations and mental representations of the ritual, but rather the situation of the ritual itself.

Participation in a ritual has been theorized to express or signal specific attitudes towards other members of the community and towards the members of the out-group. Depending on the character of the ritual practice, the emphasis might be on commitment to the group and willingness to sacrifice for it, or it might be on trust and a readiness to collaborate with one's peers. Commitment signalling theories draw on broader evolutionary theories and argue that many ritual practices can be understood as costly (or difficult to fake) signals of participants' commitment to the group (Sosis and Alcorta 2003; Sosis 2006; Bulbulia and Sosis 2011; Bulbulia 2013). The empirical evidence from embodied cognition studies can in many ways complement this theoretical approach by showing how bodily practices create hard-to-fake signals of commitment and cooperation. The practices that draw our attention are the signals that are often dependent on bodily manipulations and the use of external tools and circumscribed places, such as initiation rituals in the bush, all of which are important elements in embodied cognition. Thus, the focus is on how the signalling in a ritual is generated and how it adds to the implicit knowledge of group membership and commitment that these practices help establish, both in relation to the outside world (other group members, out-group) and inwards, strengthening identities and attitudes.

Apart from the ritual practices functioning as communicative devices, most rituals also include verbal utterances, often in formalized forms (e.g. recitation, singing, etc.). Religious and ritual language is highly metaphorical. This is of course not surprising, given that many religious concepts are abstract or ungraspable by human perception. For this reason, such concepts need to be mapped onto other structures that are perceivable and familiar. *God as father* is one of the pervasive metaphors used in Christianity. The concept of a highly abstract deity is thus mapped onto the easily understood, familiar, and close family head. Since the concept *father* changes in socio-political contexts throughout history, the behaviour that is evoked by the metaphor will change too, thus, in one context, the metaphor is associated with a relationship of reverence and formality while in other contexts it would be casual and intimate. Thus, in different contexts, one would approach god in fear and trembling or in joyous embrace. Even though

the exact same metaphor is used, there is an essential difference in both theology and ritual practice.

Again, the question of congruence between doctrine and embodied devices used in ritual practice surfaces in the use of metaphors. Could an emphasis on one metaphor as opposed to another have influenced religious-political change? For instance, did the metaphor of *church as the body of Christ* strengthen internal differentiation and hierarchization within the church and secure *the head* as the central authority of the church? The idea of how the ecclesiastical institution should function and look is mapped onto the organization of the physical body with its many parts and organs with specific functions, and the head as the intuitive seat of power over the body. It is up to historians to test such hypotheses against the available historical material, exploring if and how changes in metaphorical language (be it changes in interpretation of a metaphor or metaphorical substitutions or innovations) contribute not only to theological and doctrinal changes, but also to socio-political ones.

Culture Is Environment

As mentioned in the previous section, rituals occur in social situations that deal with human and superhuman agents, the latter of which are not in fact physically present. To ease the task of dealing with immaterial beings, Matthew Day argues that religious rituals provide their substitutes in the form of material objects such as statues and images as well as structured (sacred) spaces that are suggestive of the superhuman agents' characteristics. Material culture makes it possible to transfer communication with those agents through material objects, thus helping the mind to work with 'easier on-line substitutes'. Day claims in fact that 'rather than thin cultural wrap arounds that decorate the real cognitive processes going on underneath, these elements could represent central components of the relevant machinery of religious thought' (2004: 116). He concludes by suggesting that concepts of superhuman agents might not have been possible (thinkable) if not for those cultural tools and devices, a point made early on by Steven Mithen (1996). In spite of the vast and diverse ethnographic evidence on cultural tools, there seems to be very little research on the functions and cognitive enhancements such tools might provide in the context of religious rituals. Such research could focus on mental and affective states as well as behaviour and attitudes that are connected with the use of such tools.

Candace Alcorta and Richard Sosis argued that 'like the signals of nonhuman ritual, the signals of religious ritual clearly elicit neuro-physiological responses in participants and influence the nature of social interaction' by engaging innate responsive modules and routes, predisposed for automatic reactions (2005: 331). Such trigger-response coupling can thus in many cases be seen as culturally non-specific, which reflects the wide extension of ritual elements across the globe. Although they differ in scope and tonality, the ritual use of visual cues, music, or synchronous movements seems to be particularly efficient in conveying important social and religious contents and attitudes. Among

visual cues are those invoking perception of agentic presence, often in the form of eyes that have been shown to increase human cooperation and decrease cheating (Haley and Fessler 2005; Bateson et al. 2006; Krátký et al. 2016). The monumentality of religious architecture and lavishness of ceremonial procedures can be understood as another type of visual cue, overwhelming human senses and enhancing the feeling of awe and a subsequent enhancement of social cohesion (Keltner and Haidt 2003; Shiota et al. 2007; Piff et al. 2015). Music, used during religious rituals (from simple forms such as drumming to complex polyphonies and orchestral compositions), has also been shown to influence emotional states and underlying neuroendocrine processes (Brown and Volgsten 2006). Responses to listening to music have also been shown to direct behaviour in social interactions (Lang et al. 2016). Rhythmic beat and synchronous movement accompany many collective rituals, activating physiological and psychological processes of emotional alignment, connected with heightened collaborative and bonding behaviours and strengthened sense of community and solidarity (Fischer et al. 2013; Reddish et al. 2016; see also Weimer, Chapter 15 in this volume).

While many cultural tools seem to draw on universal, evolved mechanisms, to get to more detailed and specific understandings of ritual forms, it is necessary to pay attention also to the shapes and nuances that distinguish the practices from each other. Focusing on the particularities of ritual practice and comparison with other ritual forms can reveal underlying functions and help to answer questions about the relative success of one form (or group) over other. To help further this inquiry, research should focus on the repertoire of tools used in ritual and the valences and moods it actuates, and on attitudes and behaviours that are linked to them. The differences in forms and behaviours in the use of cultural tools show inherent trends and ordering within religious groups and traditions. For example, the use of statues in ritual contexts, where some traditions allow participants to touch or kiss the statues while others permit participants only to kneel in front of them in reverence, illustrates how different behavioural (and bodily) strategies convey different signals.

Body and Doctrine

Manipulating bodily states can be seen as an effective tool to influence mind states, from emotions to attitudes. This does not necessarily mean that the use of this tool is always deliberate and intentional, or even conscious. Although religious leaders and specialists may enforce particular bodily manipulations (through orthodoxy or orthopraxy) as correct expressions of devotion or other religious attitudes, their efficacy may be a result of the perception that the bodily practices are intuitively 'correct' in expressing the requisite sentiments rather than as an expression of power abuse.

Because of the interdependent body-mind unity, it is of great importance that we analyse apparent connections in rituals between doctrinally desirable mental states and prescribed (or recommended) body postures, movements, and states. The precision

and complexity of doctrinally anchored bodily manipulations range from full systems of meaningful body positions and movements (e.g. yoga) to casual recommendations of general body positioning (e.g. lowering of head or torso for prayer). The manipulations themselves are also wide-ranging, from exhausting, painful rituals lasting for days to those stressing the normal functions of a healthy organism to minimal, repetitive actions such as using prayer beads or crossing oneself.

Extreme Body Practices

Many theorists in the social sciences have argued that religious rituals function to reinforce the social cohesion of in-group members, while increasing violence and hostility towards out-groups (Durkheim 1912; Rappaport 1999; Whitehouse 2004; Atran and Henrich 2010). Some types of actions and procedures in religious rituals are in fact sometimes used intentionally for the controlled socialization of new members of secular groups (e.g. military or fraternity hazing) or as team-building and corporate loyalty consolidation activities. Those activities usually comprise extreme manipulations of the body, where the participants undergo often painful and exhausting ordeals. These rituals seemingly promote psychological relief, stronger identification with the group, and the increase of social cohesion in the community (Xygalatas et al. 2013; Fischer and Xygalatas 2014). Such rituals often incorporate painful techniques, such as skin piercing, scarification, or flagellation. Experiencing pain and stress alters the body chemistry and perception, thus playing an important role in the guilt alleviation motivational complex (Bastian et al. 2011) or leading to ecstatic and pleasurable feelings, that in turn support the repetition of such activities and an appreciation of its other components (Fischer et al. 2014). The effects of such rituals have been shown not only in the participants undergoing the actual ordeal but also in observing participants, who show similar physiological responses and often synchronize with those in pain and physical struggle (Konvalinka et al. 2011; Xygalatas et al. 2013).

Other extreme practices, which do not necessarily involve direct pain infliction, can have as much of a drastic impact on human cognition and subsequent behaviour. Fasting, sleep deprivation, and sensory deprivation, intense meditation or the use of hallucinogens and other stimulants are often employed in rituals (for early Christian fasting, see Finn, Chapter 38 in this volume). There is still a lack of rigorous empirical testing of those ritual methods and devices and their influence on cognition and behaviour. There is a great deal of research on meditation, but the results are conflicting, and some are methodologically questionable (for reviews, see Cahn and Polich 2006; Ospina et al. 2007; Goyal et al. 2014; for a critical discussion in terms of the cognitive science of religion, see Geertz 2009).

Candace Alcorta and Richard Sosis have drawn attention to the use of extreme ritual practices on adolescents, suggesting that such practices have fundamental effects on their developing brain, which at that point is highly sensitive to neurochemical changes and stimuli (Alcorta and Sosis 2005; Alcorta 2006). In the light of emerging necessity and insistence on life-span perspectives on embodied cognition (Loeffler et al. 2016),

this domain seems particularly relevant for any developmental research of ritual practice from an embodied perspective.

Kneeling

One area of research into more subtle examples of relations between bodily practices and doctrines is different power relationships in religious traditions. Many religious traditions emphasize strict power distinctions between humans and the divine, and there is often an explicit demand of a submissive attitude towards the deity (or deities). There are other traditions, of course, in which gods can be overpowered, tricked, or cheated by humans, making them somehow vulnerable, if not equals. Supplicants are given explicit explanations and statements about the power of a deity, but there are also other channels of learning about the deity and expected attitudes towards it. Gary Bente and his colleagues, reviewing the empirical evidence of power expressions and communication, suggest that 'dominance and power are … mainly expressed through subtle nonverbal cues', making people sensitive and attuned to those implicit levels of communicating power. Humans are also very good at decoding and interpreting such cues and behaviours cross-culturally (Bente et al. 2010: 763). From the point of view of embodied cognition, implicit cues and their processing are an essential part of our knowledge about the social order (Barsalou et al. 2003; Barsalou et al. 2005). Some of the most prevalent cues of dominance and submission are innately anchored in the evolutionary history of animal communication of power. The expression of dominance and subordination is mainly signalled by body posture. Subordinate individuals characteristically crouch or lay down, with closed and collapsed bodies, in the presence of a dominant individual (Darwin 1998 [1872]; van Lawick-Goodall 1968; de Waal 1982).

Power relations influence emotive behaviour and motivation (Riskind and Gotay 1982; Schnall and Laird 2003; Price et al. 2012), attentional processing (Craighero et al. 2004), memory and recollection of events involving same or similar body positions (Dijkstra et al. 2008), social processing, and other processes (Harmon-Jones and Peterson 2009; Rotella and Richeson 2013).

One of the most strikingly universal postures used in many religious traditions across the globe is some form of kneeling or prostration in front of a representation of a deity or other form of religious power and authority. Even though it is yet to be determined by extensive testing that these bodily manipulations are in fact used by the religious traditions to promote the power of a deity, such bodily positions are perfect examples of ritual body enforcements of specific attitudes and mental and emotional states.

It has been suggested that submission might be connected to the dynamics of energy expenditure by which frequent changes of posture and other movements are placed in relation to a stable and unchanging dominant reference point (Schwartz et al. 1982). Although this suggestion has not yet been tested in reference to possible embodied states, this might be another way to enforce the dominance of the superhuman agent and the submission of the ritual participants, because ritual activity is comprised of

participants' body movements and changes of posture. Conservative Protestant services, where the congregation is required to alternately sit and stand during different parts of the liturgy, can be seen as an interesting albeit minimalistic example of these dynamics. A more excessive example can be found in votive religious traditions. The energy expenditure in such traditions, usually supplemented by painful and lengthy procedures, can be understood both as a statement of devotion as well as an offering in expectancy of personal benefit. One example of such physically exhausting rituals is the Tinos pilgrimage, a yearly Orthodox Christian event commemorating the *Dormition of Virgin Mary* which involves pilgrims crawling on their hands and knees through the streets towards the *Panagia Evangelistria* church (Håland 2012).

While experimental evidence supports similar assertions about other bodily postures and manipulations (e.g. Carney et al. 2015) and for vertical orientations of power perception (Giessner and Schubert 2007; Meier et al. 2007), there is so far no systematic research focusing on submissive positions and manipulations in religious rituals and their effects on human behaviour and attitudes (for preliminary results on this topic, see Kundtová Klocová 2014; Kundtová Klocová and Lang 2016).

The inferential evidence and the cross-cultural and worldwide use of such positions as signals of deference and inferiority in diverse social contexts, however, suggest that such practices in religious rituals are not mere expressions of subordination. Rather, they establish and modulate a submissive attitude and behaviour towards superhuman agents and enforce the inner hierarchical structure of a religious group.

In this light, studying ritual practices that enhance or inhibit specific states and attitudes by using congruent or incongruent embodied states is fundamentally important for studying religious knowledge, its change, and transmission success. This approach can help deepen an understanding of the cognitive, emotional, and motivational processes that ritual behaviour produces. An analysis of the body in ritual can also throw light on the underlying relations and interactions that take place in religious ritual activities. From a broader perspective, the results of such analyses could identify degrees of emphasis in different religious traditions and possibly fill in the blanks where there are not enough data in the historical material.

Conclusion

In conclusion, although this burgeoning new field promises highly relevant and interesting insights into ritual behaviour and religious traditions, there is still much to be done. Most of the breakthroughs in embodied cognition research are seldom found in studies of religious behaviour. And in the study of religious rituals, there is a paucity of systematic, empirical research. Much of the embodiment literature on religious behaviour, religious experiences, and religious rituals is speculative. Interesting as this literature is, a more solid empirical base is needed in order to open up the field and make it useful for future research.

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CHAPTER 6

RITUAL AND COOPERATION

JOSEPH BULBULIA

The Puzzle of Cooperation

Humans extensively and reliably cooperate with strangers. No other vertebrate species approximates the divisions of labour that have come to define human social complexity, in all its diverse forms. Stable cooperation with unrelated partners is hardly a trivial evolutionary feat. To be motivated to cooperate requires being able to predict that others will return cooperation. However, if the relevant information to predict cooperation in others is lacking, the motivation to cooperate will be undermined. Cooperative prediction requires synchronized cooperative motivation among partners. Yet for motivations to be synchronized partners must be able to predict that cooperation will occur, and that when it occurs, participation will be worth the effort. Among partners who do not frequently interact, or who face unprecedented collective challenges—uncertainty demotivates cooperative exchange. Thus, the evolution of human cooperation required solutions to two problems that could not be independently solved: (1) the production of motivations to cooperate with unrelated partners; and (2) the capacity to reliably identify such motivations in partners. Below we shall see that, when combined, these two problems present 'chicken/egg' obstacles to the evolution of cooperation.

It easy to see the cooperative prediction problem where partners may confidently predict cooperation's failure, as happens when cheating is predictable. Consider a familiar example, paying taxes. If others pay theirs, and I do not pay, then I will benefit. In the absence of disincentives, such as a punishing tax authority, I have an incentive to cheat. So too do others. Yet if nobody were to pay taxes, we will all be worse off for it. Individually considered, I should defect, and so should others. Collectively considered, we should all cooperate. We might think the solution is simple: create a tax authority that requires collection and punishes cheating. However, systems of justice themselves require policing. What will assure that the tax authority will not cheat? Who will police the police (Bulbulia et al. 2013)? Indeed, the problem of creating a reliable police force is not

universally solved. In certain countries nowadays, the police are corrupt and dangerous (Bicchieri 2006).

Half of the Puzzle: Supernatural Beliefs Motivate Cooperation, But Do Not Predict Cooperation

Philosophers have long speculated that religious beliefs motivate people to cooperate. Critias, a fourth-century Greek playwright, offers the following proto-evolutionary conjecture:

> [H]umans established laws for punishment, that justice might rule over the tribe of mortals, and wanton injury be subdued … the laws held [mortals] back from deeds of open violence, but still such deeds were done in secret, then, I think, some shrewd man first, a man in judgment wise, found for mortals the fear of gods, thereby to frighten the wicked should they even act or speak or scheme in secret … Even if you plan in silence some evil deed, it will not be hidden from the gods: for discernment lies in them … (Diels and Sprague 2001: 88 B 25)

Similarly, the ancient Chinese philosopher Mozi speculated:

> [T]he awareness of ghosts and spirits is such that it is not possible to do something in the darkest places, whether in wide marshes, in mountains and forests, or in deep ravines without the awareness of ghosts and spirits certainly knowing of it. The punishments of the ghosts and spirits are such that it is not possible [to avoid them], whether rich and noble and [having a populace that is] numerous and strong, or with brave and powerful forces, or with strong shields and sharp weapons, for the punishments of ghosts and spirits will undoubtedly overcome these things. (Johnston 2010: 299)

Both Critias and Mozi offer a similar conjecture: beliefs in spirits motivate cooperation. Put simply, if I believe that the spirits or gods will punish my failure to cooperate or will reward my cooperation, then I have an extra incentive to cooperate. Partners who share beliefs in a world where there are supernatural policing agents do not require effective natural policing forces—or any other natural motivation—to find a cooperative motivation. The cooperative motivation arises from their beliefs, whether or not the gods are actual.

There is growing evidence that religious beliefs foster cooperation. Those who believe in moralizing gods tend to endorse within-group moralities (Johnson 2005; Ginges and Atran 2009; Atkinson and Bourrat 2011). Moreover, levels of religious belief appear to increase in response to coalitional threats (Sosis et al. 2007; Chen 2010).

Hence, despite the popularity of 'supernatural punishment' theories, it is evident that supernatural beliefs do not address the core problems of social prediction. Such beliefs may address the problem of motivating cooperation. However, such beliefs do not

solve the problem of predicting cooperation. Recall where the benefits of my decision to cooperate are conditional on the cooperation of others, both the motivation and the prediction problem must be jointly solved. If I believe in a god that rewards my cooperation, then I will be motivated to cooperation. However, such a belief does not predict the cooperation of others, who may lack a similar motivation, or who might exploit me.

The Other Half of the Puzzle: Religious Rituals Enable Cooperative Prediction, But Only When Linked to Religious Beliefs

Many evolutionary lineages have evolved communication systems. The human capacity for language represents an extreme case where arbitrary signifiers may combine to represent infinitely many possible thoughts, instructions, questions, and commands. The human capacity for language has enabled extraordinary successes. However, these successes have relied on our ability to overcome the evolutionary obstacles to cooperation. Language consists of conventions. Jane might say she will cooperate, only to later defect. John and Jane might agree to drain the meadow, yet later second-guess each other's commitment to follow through. Most communications systems in nature do not turn on arbitrary conventions. Rather, such systems evolve where there is an indexical relationship between the signal and the characteristic that the signal identifies in the environment.

Consider the leaping of springbok gazelles when they detect predators. The gazelles respond to predators by leaping up and down and arching their backs, as if learning to use a pogo stick. This behaviour is called 'stotting'. It is puzzling because we would not ordinarily expect creatures to exhaust themselves in the presence of their most dreaded predators—as if to say 'here I am' (Zahavi and Zahavi 1997). It is strange that springbok gazelle would fatigue themselves immediately before a potentially life-ending chase.

The puzzling behaviour makes sense when approached as a signalling device that facilitates a compromise between predator and prey. Consider, predatory lions wish gazelles to expose their necks without a chase. On the other hand, gazelles prefer their predators to starve without a chase. Between these two extremes there lies the area for a compromise that stotting enables. Lions would prefer to avoid chasing gazelles they will never catch. Fit gazelles share this interest: they too prefer to avoid life-or-death chases at each encounter with a lion. Stotting offers a mechanism for cooperative assurance. Only fit gazelles can stot, allowing their jumping behaviours to evolve as honest signals of fitness and speed. By responding to stotting with apathy, lions receive a benefitting rest. Two astonishing facts, a gazelle's strange leaping, and a lion's indifference to the spectacle—can be explained as elements of an honest-signalling system that has evolved to facilitate cooperation (FitzGibbon and Fanshawe 1988). The example generalizes. Wherever a cooperative creature may perturb the world in just such a way that a non-cooperative creature could not, and wherever the perturbations may be observed

by similarly cooperative partners, evolution has scope to target and amplify dispositions to link cooperative responses to these behaviours.

Some authors object that commitment signalling is unlikely to explain social evolution because it is always in a defector's interest to imitate a signal, join a cooperative venture, and to defect (Schloss and Murray 2011). However, this objection would appear to undervalue that commitment signals function to index commitment-properties, and for this reason are 'hard to fake' (Frank 1988). Consider some simple examples. Ed offers Trundle a diamond engagement ring. With this gift, Ed proves his commitment to Trundle because he can only afford one diamond and Trundle knows it. From the gift of the ring, Trundle perceives Ed's commitment more reliably than any words, because the gift closes options. For this reason, the ring indexes a commitment.

Does religious ritual assure cooperative prediction? In the 1990s, William Irons argued that religious ritual evolved to enable cooperative prediction. According to Irons (1996), people perform costly rituals as a sign of group membership. This idea was also suggested by economists, who observed churches with heavy entrance requirements tend to be stronger (Iannaccone 1994). Shortly after these ideas were suggested, Richard Sosis found causal evidence for the predicted relationship between ritual costs and cooperative benefit. Sosis's analysis of nineteenth-century collectivist communes observed that in any given year, religious communes were four times as likely to outlast their secular counterparts, and that the most successful of these religious communes had the strictest entrance requirements (Sosis 2000). In a follow-up study, Sosis and Bressler (2003) found that it was the costliest religious communes that were the most likely to survive over this period, yet costly secular communes did not enjoy a similar advantage. These observations are consistent with the prediction that religious costs may be configured to facilitate cooperative success, yet be puzzling on other hypotheses. In controlled experiments, Sosis and colleagues found that the frequency of ritual participation positively predicted levels of generosity (Sosis and Ruffle 2003). These findings have been replicated outside of Israel—in Brazil (Soler 2008) and New Zealand (Bulbulia and Mahoney 2008)—and are consistent with the prediction that participation in religious rituals tends to support an especially powerful form of cooperative solidarity.

An interesting extension of the honest-signalling theory of religion comes from its application to the explanation of permanent ritual markings (Sosis et al. 2007). The authors of this study were interested in comparing the frequency of permanent-marking rituals with various social and ecological factors relevant to evaluating hypotheses for their causes, including honest-signalling hypotheses. The authors extracted data about the prevalence of permanent marking as well as other social and ecological data from a random sample of 60 of the 90 societies described in an electronic database called the Human Relations Area Files (eHRAF). The authors were interested in the economic and political covariates of permanent body-marking rituals—tattoos, scarification, teeth pulling, foot binding, neck elongation, and other such practices—as compared to rituals with no such lasting body-effects—body painting, distinctive dress, song and dance, altered states of consciousness—and similar behaviours that leave no readily identifiable trace. The team employed coders to rate the relevant economic, ritual, and political

aspects of these societies, noting that the frequency of permanent-marking rituals could be analysed to discriminate between the hypotheses of different theories, which make different predictions on the data. According to a mate-selection hypothesis, for example, males in polygynous societies would be expected to perform costlier rites than males in non-polygynous societies, as a way to attract more high-quality mating partners. A third hypothesis predicts no correlation between the demands of commitment-testing and those of costly ritual displays. If permanent displays were not linked to the demands of cooperative prediction, then we might expect no reliable correlations between social and ecological variables.

The researchers found that the strongest predictor of permanent marking strategies was the frequency of warfare. Though polygyny was positively correlated with permanent marking, the effect disappeared when the researchers controlled for subsistence strategies or frequency of war (Sosis et al. 2007: 243). The authors observe that permanent ritual markings are especially powerful devices for pre-committing members of symbolically organized groups to cooperative futures. For when one is forever branded with the marks of a group, life becomes grim wherever the group's opponents take power.

Why do rituals enable cooperative prediction? Behavioural ecologists do not ask this question. Their interest is in behaviour (Sosis and Bulbulia 2011). However, the answer is afforded when we focus on the religious beliefs. As indicated above, religious beliefs motivate cooperation by providing supernatural incentives. Such incentives are reliably communicated by rituals that would be perceived to be too costly were one not genuinely committed to the gods. I argue that ritual costs index cooperative commitments because they index the strength of religious beliefs (Bulbulia 2004).

Cooperation and the Evolutionary Problem of Insecurity

Risky Cooperation

Cooperative prediction may be compromised even when partners cannot cheat, and where it is in everyone's best interest to cooperate, if others cooperate too, what I call risky coordination (Lewis 1969). Commitment signalling theory explains cooperative prediction among partners who may observe each other's displays, yet partners can, and often do, benefit from anonymous cooperation, for which pre-exchange communication is impractical. I call partners to such anonymous exchange 'strangers'. Strangers, in my sense (those who cannot send/receive information from each other), cannot signal their cooperative commitments, and so cannot use honest signals to assure their cooperative futures. Signalling theory, taken in its widest sense, looks for mechanisms that link information to cooperative prediction. So far, I have considered how an individual's

behaviour may predict that individual's cooperative future. However, does commitment signalling scale up to support cooperation among strangers? Yes. To understand how, we must recall the distinction between 'cheating' and avoiding cooperation from its perceived risks. We may avoid cooperation because we have an incentive to cheat. However, we may avoid cooperation for other reasons.

Motivations to avoid cooperation arise where cooperation's benefits are conditional on the responses of others. Most of us enjoy parties. However, most of us would avoid the effort of travelling to a party if we predicted no one else was going. The benefit of a party depends on others turning up! Imagine we were unsure of whether a party was going to happen, or if we were confident that others were unsure of whether a party was going to happen. We might not want to take the risk of attending if we had a less attractive but certain alternative, such as going to sleep early. Going to sleep early might not be much fun, but it would surely be better than turning up to a party that no one else attends! In large and anonymous cooperative worlds, most mutually benefiting cooperation problems are threatened by the unpredictability of benefiting from cooperation rather than the predictability of benefit from cheating (Skyrms 2004; Bulbulia 2009).

Consider the following risky coordination problem proposed by the seventeenth-century philosopher, J. J. Rousseau. The problem has come to be known as the Stag Hunt.

> Were it a matter of catching a deer, everyone was quite aware that he must faithfully keep to his post in order to achieve this purpose, but if a hare happened to pass within reach of one of them, no doubt he would have pursued it without giving it a second though, and that, having obtained his prey, he cared very little about causing his companions to miss theirs. (Rousseau 1992: location 1216)

Here, Rousseau imagines a collective hunt in which all hunters would benefit through collective action. Everyone would do better were everyone to hunt deer rather than hares. There is simply no incentive to chase a hare when my partners hunt deer. However, the benefits of deer hunting are conditional on the collective actions of all hunters. Success requires a coordinated effort. By contrast, the benefits of hare hunting are conditional only on my behaviour. Hare hunting does not require others. Hare hunting pays less than cooperative stag hunting. The payoffs are safe. Hare hunting is desirable in situations where we predict no one is going to turn up.

Following the deer hunting example further, suppose I am filled with enthusiasm to hunt deer, and even willing to take risks. Yet imagine I am also confident that some among my cohort are unwilling to take such risks and are unlikely to chase deer. In such a case, I might hunt hare not from any sensitivity to risk or failure, but rather from a prediction that the deer hunt will fail. My actions here cannot be separated from my estimation of the motivations in others. Suppose I do not predict a specific failure of nerve in any individual but am aware that others are uncertain about the cooperative motivations of their partners—we might imagine a new hunting team or a decision to hunt deer after the previous hunt failed. Lacking cues that enable me to predict that others will predict cooperative success, I might sensibly lose my motivation to cooperate. Here

too, my loss of cooperative motivation does not arise from an anti-social tendency or failure of nerve. Rather, my loss of cooperative motivation arises from uncertainty that risk avoidance has been sufficiently stamped out in others. To repeat, such risky coordination dilemmas arise wherever the benefits of action depend on the responses of others. Such problems are made even more difficult to resolve from the fact that even among those most certain, cooperation will occasionally fail. After cooperation has failed, partners might sensibly doubt the cooperative resolve in others—or to be more accurate, partners might judge that not everyone will judge that the prediction problem has been resolved. Uncertainty, or merely the perception of uncertainty in others, or even the perception that others might perceive such uncertainty, are conditions that may rapidly erode cooperative prediction (Bulbulia 2012).

Consider another example, this one owing to the philosopher, David Hume:

> Two neighbours may agree to drain a meadow, which they possess in common; because it is easy for them to know each other's mind; and each must perceive, that the immediate consequence of his failing in his part, is, the abandoning the whole project. But it is very difficult, and indeed impossible, that a thousand persons should agree in any such action; it being difficult for them to concert so complicated a design, and still more difficult for them to execute it; while each seeks a pretext to free himself of the trouble and expense, and would lay the whole burden on others. (Hume 1739: pt. 32.7)

Hume's meadow identifies a similar cooperation problem to that described by Rousseau in his imagined deer hunt. Here we see that stable cooperation remains difficult to arrange even in the absence of cheating incentives. For collective action to happen, and endure, requires predicting collective action will happen. Cooperative prediction requires cooperative motivation, but cooperative motivation requires cooperative prediction. Separate solutions are not available. Both problems must be resolved together. Some have argued that religious beliefs evolved to motivate cooperation, and religious rituals evolved to predict cooperation, at both the small and large scale of social organization (Bulbulia 2004; Bulbulia and Sosis 2011).

Cooperative Niche Construction and Social Prediction

The general process by which organisms alter the conditions upon which selection operates on them is called 'niche construction' (Odling-Smee et al. 2003). Considered at its most general level of abstraction, the process of niche construction

> occurs when an organism modifies the feature-factor relationship between itself and its environment by actively changing one or more of the factors in its environment, either by physically perturbing factors at its current location in space and time, or by relocating to a different space-time address, thereby exposing itself to different factors. (Odling-Smee et al. 2003: 41)

Many lineages alter their environments—or flee to better environments—to stabilize the effects of selection. Organisms migrate, conceal themselves, build shelters, burrows, dams and hives, as well as emit toxins or odours, and adjust their worlds in innumerable different ways to alter selection's effects. Notably, we have seen that honest-signalling theory is built on the idea that organisms can generate indexical-personal displays that modify the epistemic circumstances of their audiences, in ways that foster mutually enhancing exchange. Personal commitment displays adjust the 'feature-factor' relation of a cooperative environment. Through honest signalling, a tough cognitive problem of anticipating the effects of cooperative exchange may be reduced to the production of a gesture given in an instant, and its interpretation taken at a glance. Certain types of modifications that organisms make to their worlds have only temporary effects. A stotting gazelle perturbs her body, a signal is generated, interpreted, and then lost. However, many other transformations are durable. Indeed, certain transformations produce effects on the selective environments of offspring. A common example comes from the lowly earthworm:

> Through their burrowing activities, their dragging organic material into the soil, their mixing it up with inorganic material, and their casting, which serves as the basis for microbial activity, earthworms dramatically change the structure and chemistry of the soils in which they live … it follows that most contemporary earthworms inhabit local selective environments that have been radically altered, not just by their parent's generation, but by many generations of their niche-constructing ancestors. (Odling-Smee et al. 2003: 11)

A niche-construction perspective is interesting for considering the adaptations that facilitate the success of cooperation among strangers because the mechanisms for this success cannot reside entirely within the relevant agents' control (at least not straightforwardly). Niche-construction theory focuses on the possibility for the evolution of exogenous designs that express and synchronize the cooperative motivations of isolated partners (Bulbulia 2011). Might religious ecologies have evolved as part of 'the cooperative niche'?

Cooperative Niche Construction Theory Applied to Religion: The Evolution of Charismatic Ecologies

I use the term 'charismatic' loosely in Weber's sense, as an exceptional quality that forms the basis for controlling authority (Weber 1946). I favour the term 'charismatic' because I am interested in how religious beliefs and rituals may co-evolve to compel powerful and automatic cooperative responses across large populations.

Recall that signalling theory, taken in its widest sense, looks for mechanisms that link information properties—signals—to mechanisms that generate mutually benefiting collective behaviours, i.e. cooperation. According to the charismatic-signalling

mode (Bulbulia, 2009), the causal arrow running from a display (including those of charismatic persons) to commitment is reversed: a charismatic display is not functionally configured to index the cooperative traits of specific partners, but rather configured to cause such traits, relatively automatically, with an authority that governs estranged partners (in our sense of estranged: isolated, so that personal displays are infeasible).

Considering the design problems for coordination problems among strangers—we are able to understand what these designs require: (1) a coordination mechanism needs to reliably trigger cooperative motivations; and (2) people need to be exposed to such triggers. I consider these functional targets in turn.

Design Target 1: Triggers cooperation automatically

Knowing nothing else, we might suppose that coordination mechanisms will act to disable strategic choice-making. In part, such disabling requires suppressing our ability to attribute mental states to others and ourselves. In Hume's meadow or on Rousseau's stag hunt, it is required that partners do not second-guess each other's decisions; they should not be sensitive to the risks of coordination's failure conditional on the perception of risk among others; rather, they should act by an inner compulsion.

Design Target 2: Synchronous activation

Cooperative motivations must affect sufficiently many partners for coordination to happen. This design requirement yields a set of architectural and educational requirements. For example, the relevant triggers must extend across a large geographical range, and the motivational effects must endure sufficiently long enough to cause coordination to occur. In much the same way that people must share an acceptance of a monetary instrument for the money to motivate behaviour, coordination partners must share a response to the motivational triggers that affect cooperation. Put another way, the motivational triggers must be arranged to synchronize the motivational states of strangers (Bulbulia and Frean 2010).

It is appropriate to describe the culturally evoked forms that meet the twin demands for reliable, synchronous expressions of cooperative states: charismatic signals.

Evidence for Charismatic Ritual Signalling

Evidence 1: A Laboratory Investigation of Generalized Charity from Synchronous Body Movement

An emerging experimental literature in social psychology reveals that individuals who synchronize their behaviours with each other tend to express higher levels of solidarity and cooperation when compared to those who engage in asynchronous motions, or with those who do not move (Mogan et al. 2017). Notably, similar cooperative effects have

been found among pairs of individuals who mimic each other (van Baaren et al. 2003). However, among pairs who mimic each other, cooperative responses have also been found to extend to individuals outside the interacting dyads, leading to non-specific or 'generalized' charity (van Baaren et al. 2004). From the vantage point of cooperative niche-construction theory, generalized charity is interesting because it suggests the possibility that positive contagions of cooperation may arise from ritual events that employ synchronous regimes.

To test whether generalized cooperative effects turned up in groups larger than mimicking dyads, Reddish and his colleagues developed a motor coordination task that aligned partner movements to a focal source (a metronome) (Reddish et al. 2013). One of the most well-supported theories in social psychological research, called 'the minimal group paradigm', reveals that when participants are placed in groups of any kind, even totally random groupings, they tend to rapidly exhibit social discriminating responses, preferring those with whom they are grouped to the exclusion of those outside (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Whereas the minimal group paradigm predicts that cooperative effects would be limited to fellow participants, a cooperative niche-construction model predicts generalized giving of the kind observed from dyadic mimicry interactions, on the theory that ritual movements function as charismatic triggers that support cooperative patterns of exchange among strangers.

To determine the effects of synchronized body motions, Reddish and his colleagues assembled participants into small groups, and varied levels of synchrony and asynchrony among each group's movements (including a no-movement condition). The team also varied conditions in which a target for charity was selected from within their experimental group or from outside. Consistent with previous research, the team found that synchronous body movements enhanced prosocial responses in subsequent tasks. However, against the minimal group hypothesis and in favour of the generalized giving hypothesis, statistical analysis showed that the effect of synchronous movement on charity did not respect group membership. Those who moved synchronously were equally likely to give to someone outside their participant condition as they were to someone from within. These findings are remarkable, in the first instance, because they confirm the result that cooperation can be expressed even in the emotionally impoverished setting of the laboratory, merely from synchronous body regimes. More interesting for our purposes, the data reveal that the effect of such cooperation is not discriminating in favour of known participants, but rather also extends to strangers. This result is consistent with the prediction that charismatic signals suppress theory of mind and strategic reason. Rather, cooperative responses to synchronous activities *reduce* sensitivity to cooperative risks.

Evidence 2: A Field Investigation of the Synchronous Effects on Participants and Spectators in a Highly Arousing Naturally Occurring Ritual

A recent investigation of the physiological effects of a highly arousing Spanish firewalking ritual, regarded by participants to be sacred, revealed surprisingly high levels of

synchrony in a bio-marker of arousal, heart rhythms, among both participants and observers (Konvalinka et al. 2011). The study occurred in the village of San Pedro Manrique in northern Spain at the height of the village's most important annual celebration: the festival of San Juan. The fire-walk occurred in an amphitheatre that seats about 3,000 spectators, roughly five times the village population. The team obtained heart rhythm data from 12 fire-walkers, and nine 'related' spectators who were either relatives or friends of at least one fire-walker, as well as from 17 unrelated visitor-spectators. The data were analysed using a technique called 'recurrence quantification analysis' and 'cross-recurrence quantification analysis', which enabled numerical comparisons between both individuals and groups in this sample. The team theorized that there would be synchronous arousal detectable in the heart rhythms of both the participants (those who walked across the fire) as well as among observers, an 'effervescence' that has been described by anthropological observers, yet which prior to this research had not been demonstrated using quantitative measures. For our purposes, there are two important results from this study:

1. Recurrence plots revealed that the heart rhythms that were most synchronized during the ritual where those of the fire-walkers. That is, in a ritual where a group of fire-walkers traverse a fire one-by-one, in serial fashion, the heart rhythms of individuals walking through the fire, and the heart-rhythms of fellow fire-walkers witnessing these acts become tightly coupled. The team explained this effect from an empathic response whereby fire-walkers identified most strongly with the ordeals of fellow fire-walkers from a shared experience of the ordeal.
2. The heart rhythms of fire-walkers and 'related' spectators were found to be semi-synchronized. That is, people who were not fire-walkers but had close relationships with those who were fire-walking were coupled in their heart rthythms with all fire-walkers. This is interesting because the effect extended to fire-walkers the spectators did not personally know. Such a coupling of heart-rythms across social boundaries suggests that this high arousal ritual tended to bind people in a core biomarker of heart-rate variability. Here, two hearts beat as one, even though the heart belongs to people who are not personally familiar to each other. The fire-walking ritual elicited a binding of embodied responses.

These observations are consistent with the demands of coordination assurance device. The fire-walk operates relatively automatically among spectators and synchronizes their arousal. The effects operate in a general way: if a spectator is friends or family with one fire-walker, the arousal transfers. Notably, much less synchronization among heart rhythms was found among unrelated spectators, suggesting that the ritual does not operate invariantly without prior experiences and associations. It is important to recognize that effects are not automatic in the way that, say, entering a sauna, is automatic—everyone perspires. Rather, people must have some prior interest that leads them to value the ritual as important.

Evidence 3: Human Sacrifice and the Entrenchment of Social Inequality

It has long been speculated that institutional priestly classes evolved to ratify and entrench social inequality (Wheatley 1971; Wason 2008; Coulanges 2010 [1890]). The idea: political authority protected religious elites because religious elites legitimized political authority. There is widespread evidence of ritual human sacrifice at the primary areas of urban civilization (Davies 1981: Brown 1991; Hughes 1991; Carrasco 2000; Puett 2002). This evidence supports theorized links between the emergence of ritual human sacrifice and stratified power hierarchies.

Global evidence of ritual human sacrifice is found in the seven primary areas of urban genesis:

1. In Mesopotamia, Royal Tombs at Ur show that young children and courtesans were buried with rulers: these victims were part of what appear to be elaborate funerary rituals (Baadsgaard et al. 2011). Kuijt (1996) proposes that Natufians practised ritual human sacrifice in order to symbolically and physically link communities and limit the perception or reality of social differentiation.
2. In Egypt, it appears that ritual human sacrifice was mainly retainer sacrifice—pre-dynasty kings were buried with servants. The phenomenon of human sacrifice appears to have been short-lived (Morris 2007; Van Dijk 2007).
3. In the Indus Valley, early art depicts human sacrifice, but archaeological evidence remains unclear. One reference suggests Indus valley people were aware of human sacrifice, but that it was discouraged rather early and discontinued (Klostermaier 1984).
4. In the North China Plains, the evidence points to large-scale human sacrifice at the beginning of the Shang Dynasty; it has been conjectured that such sacrifice helped the Shang to legitimize political control over the population, and to consolidate alliances in wars against external polities (Shelach 1996).
5. In the Yoruba territories of South-western Nigeria, archaeological evidence is scarce, but between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, human sacrifice appears to have functioned to legitimize Yoruba political power. It has been argued that human sacrifice glorified the status of elites in Yoruba society as a means to justify inequality between slaves and other members of the tribe (Awolalu 1973; Ojo 2005).
6. In the Central Andes, decapitation was a common form of ritual sacrifice—a large number of physical remains of trophy heads are found in the archaeological record, anticipating the rise of central political authority (Verano 1997; Conlee 2007; Toyne 2015). Scholars have argued that political power and ritual violence conspired to promote institutionalized social inequality in the Andes (Swenson 2003).
7. In Mesoamerica, ritual human sacrifice is widely thought to have legitimated elite political authority, to maintain the subservience of their subjects, and to

communicate their prestige and domination to neighbouring polities as a type of external propaganda (Broda 1987; Winkelman 1998; Carrasco 2000; Pitcavage and University of California 2008).

Researchers have conducted quantitative analysis of the social control hypothesis in the Pacific. Molecular biologists use phylogenetic comparative methods to study the evolution of traits in genetic lineages. However, because cultural traits can also be inherited in social lineages by a process of cultural modification and transition, phylogenetic comparative methods have been used to study the evolution of cultural history (Gray et al. 2009; Jordan et al. 2009; Currie et al. 2010).

Recently, Watts and colleagues built an open-source database of Pacific Cultures specifically to test evolutionary theories of religion. The database is called Pulotu (Watts et al. 2015). In a recent study, Watts and his colleagues applied Bayesian phylogenetic comparative methods to a culturally diverse sub-sample of 93 traditional Austronesian cultures, evaluating the evidence for cultural co-evolution between ritual human sacrifice and social stratification (Watts et al. 2016). The term 'social stratification' refers to inherited differences in wealth and status, and is thought to have been one of the earliest forms of hierarchical structuring to emerge in human history.

The team's initial descriptive analysis revealed that human sacrifice was common in traditional cultures, occurring in almost half of those sampled. Specifically, evidence of human sacrifice was observed in five of the 20 egalitarian societies (25%), 17 of the 46 moderately stratified societies (37%), and 18 of the 27 highly stratified societies (67%) sampled. Across the sample, social elites conducted the ritual sacrifices, and social underclasses, slaves, prisoners, and prisoners of war were the victims.

Watts and his colleagues systematically tested how human sacrifice and social inequality co-evolved using two series of analyses. In the first series of analyses, they tested how human sacrifice co-evolved with general social stratification by grouping moderate and high stratification societies together, referred to hereafter as 'social stratification' and found substantial support for the theory that human sacrifice did co-evolve with social stratification. However, while the data support the theory that human sacrifice functioned to stabilize social stratification once it had arisen, the data and model do not support the proposition that human sacrifice affected whether egalitarian cultures became socially stratified in the first place.

In a second series of analyses Watts and his colleagues tested how human sacrifice co-evolved with high social stratification by grouping egalitarian and moderately stratified societies together. In the best fitting model, cultures with human sacrifice were more likely to gain high social stratification than cultures without human sacrifice. However, there was no support that ritualized human sacrifice helped sustain high social stratification once it had emerged. This finding is consistent with global evidence that ritual human sacrifice was a transitional phase in the evolution of inequality.

Why might ritual sacrifice have provided a platform on which social inequality could be established and a platform on which social inequality could evolve to

become rigid? The historical record presents a baffling diversity of ritual types, such as the funerals of chiefs, the inauguration of new buildings and boats, offerings to gods in exchange for plentiful harvests, offerings to gods for protection from natural disasters, amends for transgressions of social taboos, and other occasions. The means of death were equally varied and included being crushed under a newly built canoe, buried in the foundations of a building, bludgeoning, strangulation, drowning, burning, stabbing, and being rolled off a roof and then decapitated (Beatty 1992; Burt 1994). It has long been argued that part of the reason sacrifice supported social control is that priests and political elites could displace blame for removal of members of society onto the gods, thus absolving the priests and kings from blame (Valeri 1985).

However, there is likely more to the story. Even if ritual victims were rarely social elites, it is notable that the victims of ritual sacrifice were not restricted to enemies of the state. Across the Pacific (and elsewhere) priests and priest/kings killed members of their own society who posed no threat. It has long been speculated that one of the functions of ritual human sacrifice is to signal elite power—the potential to inflict mortal harm on others (Broda et al. 1987). Evolutionary biologists have long known that vivid coloration, pungent odours, strident alarms, and crippling stings have co-evolved in many lineages as conspicuous markers of menacing creatures, such as wasps and snakes. Biologists call this mode of communication aposematic signalling, from the Greek *apo* 'away' and *sēma* 'sign'. Arguably, ritual killing is an effective signalling system for the communication of elite power (Bulbulia et al. 2017). There is ample evidence that elites create substantial demands for objects that signal their wealth and political power. For example, the archaeological record indicates that the rise of politically complex societies in the areas of primary urbanization exhibit market stagnation in technology, a corresponding flourishing of royal jewellers and praetorian guards, a growth in infrastructure supporting priestly classes, and, relatedly, increasingly extravagant sacrificial-theatre complexes and monumental architecture (Wheatley 1971).

These apparently wasteful and inefficient practices of conspicuous consumption do more than effectively display elite superiority. Because the displays take on a sacred significance, they also function to coordinate the motivations and expectations of entire populations, providing a powerful motivational underpinning for long-range economies of exchange (Wheatley 1971; Broda et al. 1987). Thus, not only did ritual sacrifice legitimate lethal political power, but by displaying its brutality, social elites could vividly signal their capacity to inflict suffering on others, both within and from outside their communities. In this respect, the display of ritual human sacrifices, in many instances amplified through ritual theatres that broadcast its gruesome results, may have functioned to project elite status as arbiters of life and death. Here too, displacing responsibility to the gods, elites could legitimize their brutal actions, while at the same time suppressing non-elite resistance.

Conclusion

Religious rituals are a puzzling and ancient feature of human life. The rituals that appear to most powerfully affect people, and that appear to have been transmitted with the greatest fidelity, are associated with sacred beliefs. Indeed, sacred beliefs and ritual practices cannot be neatly extricated from each other: both elements form part of culturally evolved systems—which scholars now call religions. In the first section, I examined how sacred beliefs may function to motivate cooperative responses, noting, however, that sacred beliefs do not stably motivate cooperation that is threatened by cheating unless such beliefs may be outwardly verified by a person's behaviour and practices. I described evidence that religious rituals served to verify sacred beliefs by indexing their strength. People will tend to avoid the resource and opportunity costs of religious rituals unless they possess sacred beliefs.

In the second section, I examined how sacred beliefs and rituals (religion) may support cooperation even in settings where partners do not observe each other's piety. To understand how religion supports large-scale cooperation, it is important to understand how such cooperation is threatened by uncertainty about cooperative benefits rather than by certainty about gains from defection. Here I considered evidence that synchronous rituals evoke cooperative responses relatively automatically and in unison among partners who are committed to the rituals, thus suppressing otherwise difficult problems of cooperative prediction.

The chapter concluded by considering the mechanisms by which ritual human sacrifice facilitated the emergence of social inequality. Fortunately, ritual human sacrifice was a short-lived episode in the human transition to urban life, but it was nearly universally practised at that transition. To make sense of the functionality of ritual human sacrifice, I appealed to the theory of aposematic signalling according to which organisms prominently display their capacity to damage non-elites. In a religious setting, I argued, ritual human sacrifice displaces the blame of murder onto the gods, while at the same time effectively displaying the capacity of religious and political elites to inflict mortal harm. The social inequality that religion supported in the transition to large-scale civilization may be regarded as a form of cooperation, though one in which elites disproportionality benefited.

Though it might be tempting to imagine that religion inherently fosters social inequality, history reveals a more complex reality: opponents of inequality from Bartolomé de las Casas to Abraham Lincoln to Martin Luther King found religious motivations to oppose inequality. As with nearly every fundamental innovation, the uses to which religion is put in order to manage social interactions are not fixed. Evolutionary religious studies has investigated only a narrow bandwidth of these functions. My aim here has been to clarify several ways in which rituals and beliefs co-evolved to coordinate social responses, at both small and large social scales.

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CHAPTER 7

RITUAL AND TRANSMISSION

ISTVÁN CZACHESZ

Introduction

This chapter asks the question how rituals contribute to cultural transmission. The transmission of cultural information has been viewed traditionally as one of the functions of rituals. A cursory look at the field of ritual studies reveals widespread interest in cultural continuity, especially in the context of 'calendric rituals', 'maintenance rituals', 'traditionalism', or 'confirmatory rituals' (e.g. Zuesse 2005: 7841–5). As Catherine Bell noted, 'Most rituals appeal to tradition or custom in some way, and many are concerned to repeat historical precedents very closely' (2009: 145). Scholars of rituals have taken it for granted that rituals somehow preserve traditions; however, how they do that has remained an understudied problem.

As we will see below, answering the question of whether cultural transmission takes place in rituals depends on how one defines ritual and culture in the first place. For example, Sigmund Freud's theory of ritual as compulsive behaviour (*Zwangshandlung*) (Freud 1941; English translation, Freud 1933) seems to leave little room for cultural transmission. A more recent version of Freud's theory, developed by Pascal Boyer and Pierre Liénard (Boyer and Liénard 2006; Liénard and Boyer 2006), treats rituals in the context of obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), which is defined as strong compulsion to engage in stereotyped and repetitive activities with no rational justification. Again, cultural transmission is not a significant topic in this theory. Although these approaches assume cultural continuity in ritual behaviour (especially in collective rituals), they account for it with reference to recurrent psychological factors rather than the passing on of knowledge. In contrast, the theory of the modes of religiosity, developed by Harvey Whitehouse (Whitehouse 1995; 2000; 2004) considers rituals primarily as venues of cultural transmission.

In this chapter I discuss the transmission of information in rituals in three different ways: (1) in the brains of individuals; (2) in external memory stores (artefacts); and (3) in epigenetic programming. Although the problems of how rituals 'maintain'

social structures, what they 'communicate', or how they promote social cohesion are related to the issue of transmission, they are not the primary focus of this chapter. In the first section of the chapter, I outline the problem of transmission against the background of religious studies and more traditional approaches to rituals. In the second section, I concentrate on what ritual theories tell us about memory and its involvement in rituals, with special attention to Whitehouse's theory of the modes of religiosity and insights from the cognitive science of religion. The third section reviews some important developments in memory studies that allow for a more nuanced understanding of the role of memory in rituals. I give a brief overview of human memory systems, their neurological foundations, and some major factors that modulate their performance. The fourth section considers the role of action, artefacts, and epigenetics in ritual transmission. Finally, I outline a model of inheritance systems to study transmission in rituals.

Cultural Transmission in Religion and Ritual

Scholars often take it for granted that rituals contribute to the maintenance of cultures and societies. The vagueness of such propositions derives, at least partly, from the confusion of etic and emic perspectives. For example, the Vestal Virgins protected the state fire of Rome and ritually reignited it whenever it went out by accident (Cancik-Lindemaier 2002). Romans feared that the extinction of the fire would bring about calamities, including the destruction of the city (e.g. Dionysus of Halicarnassus 2.67.5). We can say that from an emic perspective, the ritual activity of the Vestals in fact maintained the life of the city. The body of rituals executed by the Vestals and the rituals surrounding them thus certainly included an aspect of maintenance.

Taking an etic perspective, one could argue that the rituals of the Vestals contributed to the maintenance of Roman order, irrespective of the above-mentioned beliefs concerning the fire. It has been argued (Kroppenberg 2010), for example, that the Vestals were the 'living constitution' or 'totem' of the republic, and 'stood as guardians at the border of civilization and chaos'. Although this highly symbolic interpretation possibly conveys something of the significance of the institution of the Vestals for Rome, it has limited value for understanding what was transmitted within the rituals themselves and how it was transmitted. A symbolic interpretation of a ritual (or institution) concentrates on the *meaning* of the ritual for the interpreter and postulates meanings for contemporary participants and observers as well. It is questionable, however, whether the implicit messages that scholars decipher can be considered as the actual content of transmission in the ritual. Although it is true that a ritual can evoke interpretations, such interpretations will be idiosyncratic and divergent without the normative influence of other factors.

To take another example, more relevant for the purposes of this Handbook, Paul's symbolic interpretation of baptism in 1 Romans 6:1–11 could guide the reflections of the early Christ-followers on their own baptism as well as on other people's baptisms; if communicated in the framework of catechism, it could also exert influence on how someone experienced baptism as a participant of the ritual. However, the interpretation is still external to the ritual and is not transmitted within the ritual itself.

Ritual Transmission and the Modes Theory

Based on his fieldwork in Papua New Guinea, anthropologist Harvey Whitehouse articulated the 'theory of the divergent modes of religiosity' or simply the Modes Theory in a series of publications (Whitehouse 1995; 2000; 2004). As Whitehouse (1995: 203–21) acknowledged, his theory is owed partly to former theories in the sociology of religion, such as Max Weber's model of the routinization of charisma. However, Whitehouse's theory connects sociological and psychological variables in a novel way. In his fascinating ethnography, Whitehouse (1995) documented the rise and fall of a reform movement within a syncretistic religion in Papua New Guinea. The Pomio Kivung movement was a *cargo cult* that expected the return of the deceased ancestors in the shape of white-skinned Europeans at the end of times, bringing European material welfare and technological know-how to the local population—a type of religion that has been described at several locations in the Pacific region since the late nineteenth century (Lawrence 2005).[1] The history of the splinter group (the reform movement) was marked by a series of emotionally laden rituals, which intended to elicit the eschatological return of the ancestors of the villages (Whitehouse 1995: 89–154). However, since members of the movement dedicated their entire time and considerable resources to the rituals, they ended up completely exhausted and without food, at which point they were received back into the larger community. Based on his observations about the rituals and history of the movement, Whitehouse (2004: 63–85) described two *modes of religiosity* (or the Modes Theory) by means of fourteen variables (see Table 7.1).

Although the Modes Theory addresses many aspects of religious movements (see below), as a cognitive theory of religion, it hinges on the connection of the two modes with two memory systems: semantic and episodic memories, respectively. In the 1970s, the psychologist Endel Tulving (1972) suggested that some memories refer to clearly identifiable episodes in a person's life, such as 'yesterday I ate smoked fish in the marketplace'. Memories of such unique events belong to the category of *episodic memory*. Other memories consist of items without reference to a singular event in one's life, such as the

[1] The ethnographic concept of the 'cargo cult' has been criticized in recent scholarship.

Table 7.1 Whitehouse's modes of religiosity

	Variable	Doctrinal	Imagistic
	Psychological Features		
1.	Transmissive frequency	High	Low
2.	Level of arousal	Low	High
3.	Principal memory system	Semantic schemas and implicit scripts	Episodic/flashbulb memory
4.	Ritual meaning	Learned/acquired	Internally generated
5.	Techniques of revelation	Rhetoric/logical integration, narrative	Iconicity, multivocality, multivalence
	Sociopolitical Features		
6.	Social cohesion	Diffuse	Intense
7.	Leadership	Dynamic	Passive/absent
8.	Inclusivity/exclusivity	Inclusive	Exclusive
9.	Spread	Rapid/efficient	Slow/inefficient
10.	Scale	Large-scale	Small-scale
11.	Degree of uniformity	High	Low
12.	Structure	Centralized	Noncentralized

(Whitehouse 2004: 74).

names of the sorts of fish sold in the marketplace, or the fact that Finland is in Europe. Memories of such lexical items belong to the category of *semantic memory*.

A particular type of episodic memory concerns so-called *flashbulb memories*. As Roger Brown and James Kulik (1977) suggested, flashbulb memories are memories for the circumstances in which we first learned about emotionally arousing events (public news in the original theory). For example, most people remember what they were doing on 9/11, but not what they were doing the day before—the original event functioning as a flashbulb that sheds light on otherwise forgotten circumstances. A somewhat different understanding of flashbulb memory underlay the study by Ulrich Neisser and his colleagues (Neisser et al. 1996), when they followed up the consolidation of memories about a Californian earthquake among participants of the event (comparing it with the memories of people following the events from a distance in Atlanta). Their main finding was that narrative rehearsal consolidates memories. People who are directly involved in a significant event spend considerable time and energy discussing and retelling it, which leads to the formation of memories that are more vivid and detailed than the memories of outsiders.

According to Whitehouse, in the *imagistic mode*, emotionally charged, high-arousal rituals are repeated with low frequency. Rituals in the imagistic mode influence episodic memory (including the formation of flashbulb memories). The emotionally intense memories acquired in the rituals of the imagistic mode invite 'spontaneous exegetical reflection' and intensify the sense of community (Whitehouse 2004: 70–4, 105–8). Movements that operate in the imagistic mode have a non-centralized social structure, and their rituals have spontaneously generated, non-standardized meanings. In the *doctrinal mode*, of which the original Pomio Kivung movement is an example, emotionally not-so-arousing rituals are repeated frequently. Rituals in the doctrinal mode influence semantic memory. In this mode, the religious group is centralized and its theology is fixed and elaborated. The frequent repetition of low-arousal rituals in a religious tradition results in tedium (Whitehouse 2000: 44–6) and encourages imagistic 'outbursts' (Whitehouse 1995: 174, 184; 2000: 128–9).

The Modes Theory has been tested in the context of various religious traditions, including ancient religions (Whitehouse and Martin 2004; Uro 2007; 2011b). It has been argued (Czachesz 2017: 108–9), for example, that Paul's communication with the Corinthian congregation as known from his epistles aims at shifting the operation of the community away from the imagistic mode and towards the doctrinal mode. In an attempt to establish himself as the single authority in the community, he argues that he is the 'father' of the congregation, whom they are supposed to imitate (1 Cor. 4:14–16). Paul is particularly keen on establishing his theological views as the doctrinal framework in which the Corinthian religion operates. In particular, he insists that Christ sent him to Corinth to proclaim 'the gospel' (1 Cor. 1:17) and he (Paul) has the 'mind of Christ' (1 Cor. 2:16). He gives specific instructions on ethical issues, provides an authoritative interpretation of the ritual meal, and reinforces a particular view of resurrection. Arguably, Paul's thoughts about the limited value of glossolalia (1 Cor. 14) as well as his instructions concerning the orderly performance of glossolalia and prophecy (1 Cor. 14:26–32)

discourage the practice of high-arousal rituals, or at least decrease the amount of arousal involved. This dovetails with Whitehouse's suggestion that consistent doctrinal systems are correlated with low-arousal rituals, although the connection between ritual practices and doctrines remains hypothetical in the Corinthian case.

While the Modes Theory inspired the study of early Christian rituals (e.g. Luomanen et al. 2007; Uro 2011a; 2010), new developments in memory studies also posed challenges to the theory. As Tulving argued more recently, episodic memories result from the so-called 'episodic retrieval mode' (2002: 5). Memories that are remembered as episodic memories must include references to a conscious concept of the self (these things happened to me, not to someone else) and a subjective sense of time (these things happened at a particular point of my life). Rather than thinking of semantic and episodic memory as two completely different systems, it is best to consider episodic memory as a system that includes semantic memory but adds some distinct features to it (such as selfhood and subjective time, as mentioned above). It is, in Tulving's words, 'a recently evolved, late-developing, and early deteriorating past-oriented memory system' (2002: 5).

In light of these developments, the use of episodic and semantic memory in the Modes Theory needs rethinking. A further challenge is presented by the role of emotions in the formation of memories, which I will discuss in the next section of this chapter. Finally, the question has been raised whether the doctrinal and imagistic modes characterize different religious traditions (for example, are there 'imagistic religions'?), different phases of a single religion, or perhaps rituals within a single religious group.

Ritual and Memory Reconsidered

Cognitive psychologists traditionally distinguish three stages involved in learning and memory: *encoding, storage*, and *retrieval* (Eysenck 2004: 291). First, we create a memory trace of information that we perceive (encoding); second, we store it in memory, which can involve different amounts of time for different memories (storage); and third, we can later recover and extract information from memory (retrieval). Some memories last only for a short time, up to a few minutes, whereas others last for a long time (for hours, days, or years). The former is called *short-term memory*, the latter *long-term memory* (Squire and Kandel 1999: 84–91; Baddeley et al. 2015: 12–13). Finally, two types of memories can be distinguished with regard to what is remembered (Squire and Kandel 1999: 15–16; Eichenbaum 2012: 98–106). So-called *declarative* memories include memories of facts, objects, faces, or events and are available to direct, conscious reflection. Another type of memory includes attitudes, skills, and emotions of which we are mostly unaware—called *non-declarative* memory.[2]

[2] There is a related distinction between *explicit* and *implicit* memories, the former being conscious and the latter unconscious (Baddeley et al. 2015: 13–15). However, there is some ambiguity whether this concerns encoding or retrieval.

The hippocampus, of which two symmetrical copies are located deep inside the human brain, plays a crucial role in the consolidation of long-term, declarative memories. The hippocampus has connections to various parts of the brain. Different aspects of new information (such as visual, spatial, or emotional stimuli) are processed by separate brain networks, are partly combined in the so-called association areas, and after further synthesis in the parahippocampal region they finally reach the hippocampus (Eichenbaum 2012: 235–42). The amygdala, which plays a major role in emotions, sends signals to the hippocampus that increase the strength of some memories (Eichenbaum 2012: 319–25). The hippocampus remains crucial for the consolidation of memories for several years and memories remain essentially malleable during the period of consolidation (Eichenbaum 2012: 317–50).

The role of emotions in the formation of memories is a classical topic of memory research. In an experiment conducted by Cara Laney and colleagues, students were listening to two different versions of a story accompanied by a slide show (Laney et al. 2004). The emotionally laden version of the story included an attempt by a man to rape a woman during a date, and introduced much information about the man that made such a move credible, such as excessive alcohol consumption and disrespect for women. The two slide shows were identical except for a single slide. Students who listened to the emotionally laden version of the story remembered every aspect of the story better, including the gist, the central details, and the peripheral details.

Rituals that involve the recitation of emotionally arousing narratives (such as the recitation of historical or mythological narratives during festivals) are likely to have a similar effect on the memory of believers. For example, Paul's theological interpretation of the Corinthians' communal meal could have the consequence that the accompanying narrative of Jesus' death created stronger memories of the story, the ritual events, and the theological interpretation. Even if the passion of Jesus and the theological interpretation of the Lord's Supper were not recited at each celebration but only on some major occasions, such as during Easter, the emotional nature of the text certainly effected the generation of memories. The medieval Easter plays, contemporary celebrations of Holy Week, such as the Semana Santa in Spain or in the Philippines (Mendoza 1977) or Bach's Passions, can give examples of how the liturgical use of the passion narratives could generate intense emotional response.

Emotions, however, do not necessarily have a positive effect on the strength and quality of memories. Much empirical work has been dedicated to the effect of emotionally salient visual stimuli on memory. For example, subjects were shown photographs of seriously injured or mutilated victims (Burke et al. 1992; Cahill and McGaugh 1995), or arachnopobes were shown living spiders in the lab (Öhman and Soares 1994; Öhman and Mineka 2001). Such experiments yielded the result that emotional arousal leads to improved memories about central details, such as the appearance of the main actors and objects, whereas details that are not linked to the main actors and objects or are physically in the background are significantly less well remembered. One example of this mechanism is the widely discussed *weapon-focus effect*: victims of armed violence tend to focus on the weapon and fail to remember other details, such as the face of the

attacker (Steblay 1992). Not only a weapon but also other shocking visual details might serve as *attention-magnets*, which capture the attention of the spectator and minimize memories of other details.

Could early Christian rituals provide strong emotional stimuli? At least one such ritual may have been widespread among the first Christians, that is, the circumcision of non-Jewish male converts. From Paul's epistles we learn that some authorities in the Christ-movement encouraged and strongly defended this practice. According to Acts 16:3, Paul circumcised his helper Timothy, or had him circumcised. The relevant passages of Paul's epistles (1 Cor. 7:18–20; Gal. 5:2; 5:11–12) yield the overall picture that Paul's discouragement of the practice was highly controversial in the communities, which is the reason he had to use harsh rhetoric to defend his own position. By defending and spreading the practice of not circumcising converts, Paul created a distance from mainline Jewish practice and excluded a painful ritual from later Christian practice. As long as it existed, however, it certainly directed the focus of the initiate to the brave act itself, at the expense of remembering any of the details of the important event.[3]

Whereas most rituals mentioned in the New Testament probably did not function as attention magnets, they could be stressful in many ways. The concept of *stress* grasps a whole matrix of environmental conditions that affect the organism (Selye 1936). The response of the organism to stress is measured by physiological parameters, particularly changes in the endocrine system (that is, in the level of hormones in the body), providing quantitative data that are more difficult to acquire about 'emotions' or 'arousal'. The latter might or might not be included in the organism's response to stress. Stressors can be either physical, such as heat, cold, pain, or psychological, such as stressful situations (Lupien et al. 2007). In human experiments, emotions are normally induced by images or stories of the sort that we have discussed above, whereas stress is induced by stressful situations, for example, ones involving novelty, uncertainty, or a speaking assignment. How stress affects memory depends on a number of circumstances, such as the age and sex of the individual, the hour of the day when stress occurs, the sequential order of stress and memorization, and the nature of the material to be remembered. An important and widely supported finding is that stress enhances memory for emotionally laden material, whereas it negatively affects memory for emotionally neutral material (Lupien et al. 2007: 222).

Stress in rituals might be sustained for a long time, such as in initiation rites that span several days. Stressful initiations were practised in ancient religions, as suggested by Livy's description of Bacchic initiations (*History of Rome* 39.8–19) or Apuleius' description of the initiation to the mysteries of Isis (*Metam*. 11). Early Christian baptism (which we can consider as the initiation ritual par excellence of the movement) does not appear to be particularly stressful. Yet extended fasting before the ritual could be stressful. We read about fasting for one or two days in Didache 7, and Paul's fasting for three days in Acts 9 could also reflect contemporary baptismal preparation. Throughout late

[3] That is, if the ritual included anything beyond removing the foreskin.

Antiquity, baptism has been embedded in an ever-growing chain of rituals (cf. Strecker 2011), including periods of fasting (e.g. Barn. 1–2; Justin Martyr, *1 Apol*. 1.61.2; Pseudo-Clement, *Rec*. 3.67.2–4; Tertullian, *Bapt*. 20), which was probably a stressful experience for initiates.

Although strongly ascetic practices are not prescribed by the New Testament, there are various indications that they were highly esteemed among some of the first Christians (cf. Vaage and Wimbush 1999), for example, John the Baptist lived an ascetic life in the desert (Mark 1:4–6); Jesus himself is said to have spent forty days in the desert (Mark 1:12); poverty is an advantage and richness is a disadvantage when it comes to entering the Kingdom of Heaven (Luke 6:20; Matt. 19:16–30); Paul 'punishes' and 'enslaves' his body (1 Cor. 9:27); Christians are warned 'to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul' (1 Pet. 2:11). These and similar references in the New Testament suggest that stressful conditions could influence already the beginnings of early Christian cultural transmission. An influence of this sort can be seen in the frequent use of some emotionally laden subjects, such as the crucified Lord, the Kingdom of Heaven, or the final judgement, as well as in the emphasis on visionary language and apocalyptic imagery in most writings of the New Testament. Starting with the second century, a variety of Christian ascetic practices developed (see Finn, Chapter 38 in this volume). Ascetic branches of Christianity created stressful conditions for their members, not to mention the heroes of ascetic life, such as the desert fathers, pillar saints, and early monks. More research is needed to understand the influence of such stressful conditions on the formation of ancient Christians' thought world.

Self-relatedness is yet another factor that influences the formation of memories in rituals. A number of empirical studies have shown that items related to the self are remembered better than items not related to the self (Symons and Johnson 1997; Cloutier and Macrae 2008). For example, subjects in an experiment better remembered words that they thought to describe them well, than words without such self-reference (Rogers et al. 1977). Recently it has been found that self-relatedness rather than self-reference is enough to enhance memory. In an experiment (Cloutier and Macrae 2008), participants alternately selected numbers that the experimenter matched with a list of words, uttering the word that was linked with the number. Participants better remembered the words linked to numbers they selected than words linked to numbers that another subject selected. This finding is related to the well-documented observation that ownership (even if it is artificially induced in an experiment) makes things special, valuable, and attractive. The experiment demonstrates that actions (and circumstances of actions) of which we are agents are remembered better than the actions of others, as well as their results are monitored and memorized better than the results of other people's actions.

The memory effects of self-relatedness might have two different implications for memory in rituals. First, people might form stronger memories of rituals that they undergo voluntarily than of rituals to which they are subjected by the rules of their societies. For example, all else being equal, the details of voluntarily chosen baptism or initiation to a mystery are probably better remembered than obligatory initiation rites marking adulthood. Second, if an individual sees himself or herself as the agent

of a ritual, he or she might remember it better than an individual who is the recipient of a ritual, such as the initiate of an initiation rite. Learning might also enhance self-relatedness: for example, learning about the significance of baptism or another initiation rite for oneself might enhance its self-relatedness and therefore its memorability. Paul provides rich theological interpretation for baptism and emphasizes its personal nature in Rom. 6:1–11. Although he addresses already baptized members of the community in this particular passage, the addition of such explanations to the ritual could make it more memorable for new initiates. In the history of early Christianity, an extended catechumenate developed, which certainly intensified the sense of personal significance of the ritual in the initiates as well as contributed to the transmission of doctrines. Thus emotions, stress, and self-relatedness shaped cultural transmission in various phases of baptism, and their relative importance changed with the historical formation and local variation of the ritual. A long line of studies shed light on the frailty of human (episodic) memory. If there is a consistent finding about the relationship between emotions and episodic memories across the board, it is the curious effect that emotions enhance the confidence in the accuracy of memory rather than the accuracy of memory itself (Phelps 2013).

In summary, rituals contribute to the formation of new memories (as well as influence existing memories) in many ways. Some memories generated in certain types of rituals might be more reliable than others. Moderate emotional arousal and self-relatedness improve the accuracy of the information stored in memory, at least within the limited span of time examined by the empirical studies we discussed. The question can be raised, however, whether the influence of ritual on memory really plays a central role in the long-term transmission of religious traditions. Religious groups, even small-scale religious movements, have various arrangements that help the faithful transmission of the ideas of the group. From the earliest stages of the early Christian tradition we know of specialists (such as disciples, apostles, missionaries, teachers, prophets) who argued about theological doctrines and took responsibility for their dissemination in the movement. The transmission of knowledge in groups of specialists is an intriguing problem that is connected to memory studies. As far as the transmission of religion in rituals is concerned, factors other than memory probably played important roles in early Christianity, to which we will turn in the next section of this chapter.

Transmission beyond Declarative Memory: Actions, Artefacts, Situated Cognition, and Epigenetics

Since the mid-2000s, cognitive approaches to religion have increasingly paid attention to the connection between cognition, action, and artefacts. Scholars defending

embodied views of cognition often contrasted their approach with computational models of the mind (for embodied cognition, see also Kundtová Klocová and Geertz, Chapter 5 in this volume). A computational model implies that the mind carries out operations on symbols that are stored in memory, much like a modern computer functions. The main activity of an embodied mind, in contrast, consists of connecting perception with action. As we move through the environment, we perceive new opportunities for action (Varela et al. 1991); actions, in turn, lead to new perceptions, creating what is called the *perception-action loop*.

Given that rituals are actions, it would be one-sided, even strange, to restrict our discussion of cultural transmission in rituals to the realm of declarative (explicit) memory. Participation in a ritual requires first of all that the participant perform actions as dictated by his or her role in the ritual. Although learning how to perform actions can make use of declarative memory (such as memorizing the proper sequence of elementary moves), often we learn how to perform actions without accumulating explicit knowledge. Humans readily imitate each other (Heyes 2011) or synchronize aspects of their behaviour (Wiltermuth and Heath 2009), surpassing other animals, such as chimpanzees, in this ability (Henrich 2016: 38–9). We have a tendency to mimic and synchronize movements, facial expressions, postures, and emotional vocalizations with those displayed by others. Such imitative actions do not necessarily involve conscious effort or the accumulation of explicit information, although more complex forms of imitation involve the understanding of goals and cultural innovation (Byrne 2005; Legare and Nielsen 2015). While the memory of how to perform an action is sometimes called 'body memory', it is in fact more accurate to speak of procedural memory, which is a kind of non-declarative (or implicit) memory. It goes without saying that the memory that enables us to move our body in certain ways is stored in the brain and not in the limb that is moved with the help of the motor system. An interesting fact about learning and practising actions (Di Rienzo et al. 2016) is that observing others who perform the action or even thinking about performing the action improves the respective motor memories in the brain. Thus observing ritual performances and imagining oneself performing the ritual influence procedural memory. This raises the interesting possibility that members of the community acquire some procedural knowledge even if some rituals are actively performed by a limited number of participants, such as in baptism, ordination, and other Christian rituals. The (procedural) learning of actions performed in rituals results in the transmission of behavioural patterns across generations.

Procedural knowledge, in turn, creates frameworks for the learning of conceptual information. According to Whitehouse (2008: 665), standardized behaviour favours the transmission of standardized doctrinal knowledge. However, this is only one of the possible connections between procedural and declarative knowledge. Carrying out action sequences (both individually and collectively) influences cognition in many ways. For example, by moving our muscles in certain ways, we influence our general mood as well as our interpretation of conceptual information. Participants in an experiment were asked to hold a pen in their mouth and judge whether different cartoons were humorous (Strack et al. 1988). These participants thought the cartoons were funnier than did a

control group who made the same judgements without holding a pen in their mouths, which is explained by the fact holding the pen in the mouth generated muscle movements characteristic of smiling. Referring to a growing body of evidence that physical manipulation of body posture can influence our emotional and mental states (Barsalou et al. 2003; Niedenthal et al. 2005), Armin W. Geertz gave a list of typical behaviours in rituals that influence cognition:

> song, dance, clapping, swaying, jumping in place, hopping; diverse body postures such as bowing, strutting, prostration; other techniques such as torture and violence in initiation rituals, vision rituals, and mysticism rituals; use of specific techniques for changing mental states such as smoking, alcohol, drugs, fasting, extreme movement or immobility, and photic and sonic drive techniques. (Geertz 2010: 307)

Other discussions of the nature of the human mind concern the boundaries of the mind. Merlin Donald (1991: 314–19) created the concept of *exogram* to denote external traces that carry information outside the brain.[4] Exograms are attested in all human cultures, including body markings, grave decorations, notations, paintings, and writing systems. Some cognitive operations involve tight and very complex interactions with external objects, such as performing multiplication with the help of pen and paper, jotting sketches to solve spatial problems, or using drawings and diagrams to reason about abstract problems. According to Andy Clark and David Chalmers (1998), humans and their thinking tools form coupled systems so that it is justified to speak of an *extended mind* in many cases. Edwin Hutchins (1995) described how navigating a ship involves complex interactions between crew members as well as between people and instruments. Hutchins called this type of cognitive performance *distributed cognition*, suggesting that cognition does not take place in any individual part of the system (consisting of the ship and its crew) but emerges from the interaction of the parts.

If we pause for a moment to consider the material culture of Christianity that has been passed on from Late Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and Modernity, from generation to generation to the present day, it is striking that much of this heritage is related to rituals. Church buildings, their interior decoration, liturgical garments, the art of goldsmiths, even graveyards and tombstones have been created for or used in rituals (for early Christian art, see Jensen, Chapter 34 in this volume). Without ignoring artefact production in non-ritual contexts (such as in scholarship and education), we have to recognize the significant role of artefacts related to rituals in the transmission of Christianity. When it comes to the study of artefacts from the first centuries of Christian history, however, direct evidence is scarce. Apart from biblical manuscripts and magical amulets, what we consider to be Christian evidence depends heavily on interpretation, such as in the case of baptisteries. But this should not prevent us from theorizing about

[4] In neuroscience, the term *engram* denotes the (hypothetical) physical trace of a memory in the brain.

the probable role of artefacts in those early years, even if they did not survive the centuries or cannot be identified with certainty.

Artefacts play two major types of roles in cultural transmission in the context of rituals. First, as external memory stores, they record information that has been generated or used in ritual contexts, such as creedal and magical formulas, prayers, or hymns that often originate in oral tradition (cf. Uro 2013). Second, as sources of information, they shape the rituals by providing architectural settings, artistic imagery, texts, and other sensory inputs. These inputs shape participants' cognition and experience and result in the production of new artefacts, such as in the form of theological reflection, religious art, and poetry. The mechanism and constraints of the transmission process imply a number of interesting research problems, which we can mention only briefly at this place. Artefacts transmit information with varying fidelity. Although written texts can be copied with precision, ideas from texts are not automatically transferred into the minds of believers, but generate new ideas through a complex process of reception. Institutions and established techniques of textual interpretation channel the process of textual transmission. Religious art and music might convey emotions and experiences in a time-independent manner, yet the conceptual nuances of the message are usually lost and even the basic ideas behind the representation can be entirely reinterpreted by later generations.

Risto Uro (2016: 157–75) discusses three ways of engaging embodied and extended cognition while transmitting knowledge in Early Christian baptism. First, baptism generated embodied knowledge about power relationships, in particular, submission to the deity and to emerging ecclesiastical authority. Second, being performed in the presence of the larger community, baptism also generated shared knowledge about the baptized person's incorporation into the Christian community—which was all the more important since the ritual did not leave a mark on the body as circumcision did. Third, various "symbolic technologies" developed that created extended knowledge around baptism, including the practice of catechumenate, creedal formulas, and various representations of Jesus' baptism.

In addition to theories of embodiment and extended cognition (collectively referred to as 'situated cognition'), we have to make mention of another novel view of cultural inheritance in the context of rituals, that is, *epigenetic inheritance*. In a narrow sense, '[e]pigenetics refers to how genetic material is activated or deactivated—that is, expressed—in different contexts and situations' (Moore 2015: 14). For example, domestic violence will leave lasting effects on a foetus's epigenetic information and change the expression of the genes as the child develops later (Moore 2015: 100). The accumulation of such influences extends into childhood and even adulthood. Surprisingly, epigenetic changes in the organism can be passed onto subsequent generations (Moore 2015: 145–66).

The connection between epigenetic inheritance and religion is a yet unexplored area, which might reveal interesting aspects of religious traditions in future. For example, experiments confirmed that the dietary preferences of a baby are influenced by the mother's diet during pregnancy and breast-feeding (Mennella et al. 2001). As the

authors suggested, such influences may underlie differences in ethnic cuisines. This research line can highlight an interesting bio-cultural dimension of religious dietary laws. If the actual diet of populations reflects the prescriptions of their religious laws, children will be born with a biologically (epigenetically) programmed preference for certain food and intuitively reject (be disgusted by) others. Not only dietary preferences but also the utilization of nutrients, such as sugar, can be regulated by epigenetic inheritance (Bateson et al. 2004). Babies are born with various values 'pre-set', so to speak, by such parental influences, in ways that make them prepared for their future environments. Some of those pre-sets affect more than one generation, which can result in maladaptation under rapidly changing conditions, such as the sudden abundance of nutrients in a society. A well-studied human case is the Dutch 'hunger winter' of 1944–1945 (Moore 2015: 125–6). Children who were gestated during this period suffered long-term problems from the malnutrition of their mothers. Unexpectedly, children who were impacted in the first six months of pregnancy ran higher risk of obesity as adults. Animal studies confirmed this and related effects. There could be connections between these epigenetically inherited characteristics and some religious habits and values: for example, puritanism might be related to an adjustment to the scarcity of resources, leaving descendants who find themselves in much better conditions not only with peculiar values but also with health hazards such as diabetes, hypertonia, and obesity, caused by their bodies' outdated approach to nutrients.

Ritual and Inheritance Systems: Towards a New Model of Cultural Transmission in Rituals

Instead of relying on various notions of 'memory' or asking about the nature of the 'message' that is transmitted in rituals, we can think about cultural transmission in the framework of inheritance systems. In their theory of evolution in four dimensions, Eva Jablonka and Marion Lamb (2005) described four inheritance systems: genetic, epigenetic, behavioural, and symbolic. The four inheritance systems can be used to build a new model of ritual transmission:

1. The interaction of genetic inheritance with rituals can be considered only in a nutshell at this point. Rituals (and religion) have been part of the human condition for a sufficiently long period of time so that they have created evolutionary pressures. An analogy can be taken from the use of language, which shaped human anatomy and cognition (e.g. Deacon 1997). When discussing early Christian rituals, such consequences of ritual behaviour are less salient. The influence between genetic inheritance and rituals is mutual: our genetic inheritance constrains the types of rituals we can engage in, a factor that is emphasized in the cognitive

science of religion. We can assume that early Christian rituals were shaped by universal human cognitive structures. As a consequence, we can use insights from the Modes Theory and other cognitive models (such as memory studies) to understand rituals in Late Antiquity.

2. Epigenetic inheritance is an unexplored area in the study of religion. On one hand, epigenetic inheritance can lead to faster changes than genetic inheritance and we have considered some possible ramifications of this emerging field of research for the study of rituals. On the other hand, epigenetic inheritance is more rigid than cultural inheritance and does not allow for rapid innovation. Epigenetic inheritance sums up the experience of a few generations in selected domains and passes it to the next generations.
3. Behavioural inheritance can be found in humans as well as in animals. Rituals, as we have seen, are important venues of transmitting behavioural patterns. Beyond transmitting strictly religious contents, by imitative learning of ritual behaviour, people can acquire tastes, habits, and social behaviour. For example, ritual behaviour reflective of hierarchical human relationships can train individuals to cultivate hierarchical attitudes in other domains of social life as well. Analysing ritual behaviour in terms of imitative learning and social cognition can lead to a more nuanced understanding of how rituals contribute to the perpetuation of social structures.
4. Humans rely on a further channel of transmission that is specifically human, as far as we know: symbolic inheritance. Without entering into the discussion about the origins, nature, and ontological status of symbols, we can make the observation that symbols form grammatically structured systems that can be manipulated in virtually endless ways, yielding creative cultural products in different media. Whereas behavioural inheritance relies on imitation, symbolic inheritance requires interpretation, that is, information is evaluated (and probably already perceived) against an already existing framework of symbolic structures and meanings in the mind of the recipient.

In conclusion, our analysis of the connection between ritual and transmission has addressed multiple systems and mechanisms that were largely unknown or understudied before the arrival of cognitive approaches. First, we have seen how rituals engage declarative memory, modulating the formation of new memories with the help of different degrees of emotional arousal, sense of ownership, and stress. We identified ritual practices in early Christianity that manipulated declarative memories with the help of one or more of these factors. Second, we suggested that transmission in rituals occurs in channels outside of declarative memory, including procedural memory, artefacts, and epigenetic programming. We discussed how artefact culture, power relationships, and religious dietary rules could interact with ritual practice. Third, we recommended reframing the problem of religious transmission against the model of inheritance systems, aligning the dimensions of the investigation with broader issues of human genetic and cultural evolution.

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PART II

RITUAL IN THE ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

CHAPTER 8

ANCIENT SANCTUARIES

RUBINA RAJA

Sanctuaries and Rituals in the Roman World: A Complex Relationship

Ancient sanctuaries and the rituals performed there remain a much-discussed and well-researched topic (Raja 2015a; Van Andringa 2015). These spaces, which were central to ancient societies, continue to prompt discussions about their uses and functions within their contemporary settings, as well as the ancient rituals performed there. Sanctuaries were integral to ancient societies as expressions of religion and ritual practice (on ritual practice, see Bell 1992; Obadia 2007; Luginbühl 2015). Religion and ritual practice were, in opposition to the modern-day world, an integrated part of life in the ancient world (Insoll 2004). The way in which everyday life was structured in Antiquity often revolved around religious practices. Rituals were part of structuring life in general, and sanctuaries were the physical expressions of this structuring. Rituals may be seen as the media through which communication between groups of involved individuals and the gods took place (Mylonopoulos 2006; Stavrianopoulou 2006). However, sanctuaries also had non-religious functions (Raja 2015a: 310–11), which could be expressed in the layout of the sanctuaries: rooms for lodging and storage, for example.

In this chapter, the focus is on sanctuaries of the Roman period, namely, those situated in the Mediterranean cultural sphere and which date from between the first century BCE and the fourth century CE. (See Gros 1996, for a general introduction to sanctuaries in the Roman world). This period was a time when the Mediterranean world underwent extensive transformations, including Christianity's growing influence on the cultral koine of the Mediterranean from the second century CE onwards (Raja and Rüpke 2015b). The Mediterranean cultural koine not only encompassed Roman religion, both as it is known from the city of Rome and as it came to expression throughout the Roman Empire from the mid-first century BCE into the second century CE. Other religious

traditions, such as Egyptian religion and Near Eastern religions, were also part of the cultural and religious landscape of the Mediterranean region. This included Judaism, distinguished by its insistence on monotheism (Goodman 2007). This religious pluralism posed challenges for Roman emperors, but the sanctuaries of these cults must be considered an integral part of the Roman Empire's ritual space.

Places such as Dura-Europos on the Euphrates show how all such religious traditions and their buildings could be embraced and exist within one urban location (Kaizer 2016). There we find numerous sanctuaries, including a synagogue and the earliest known church, the so-called House Church (Nielsen 2014: 187–9; White 1996). The 'House Church' is a primary example of how developing rituals were reflected in the architectural developments and how changes were made in already existing architectural complexes in order to adjust to ritual practices (Jensen 2015: 258–9). The 'House Church' includes a baptistery with a basin for full-body immersion located in a side chapel of a converted private house, which indicates the centrality but also the secrecy of this ritual in the early Christian period.

The second-century CE synagogue in Dura-Europos had a centrally placed Torah-niche that, together with rich wall paintings discovered in the building, identified it as a synagogue. While the Torah-niche is a feature found in synagogues across the Mediterranean world, the wall frescos, which depict scenes from the Old Testament, stand out. These scenes present human and animal figures and thus confirm that human and animal images were used in highly religious and ritual settings at this point in time, despite the so-called *Bilderverbot* in Judaism (Nielsen 2014: 172–3). In other words, religious conventions and rules were not always followed, an important point to note when discussing archaeological evidence, which often is partial.

Dura-Europos remains a crucial example of religious plurality in what is termed the early Christian period. The sanctuaries of the city, pagan as well as Jewish and Christian, and the data they provide identifying sanctuaries as ritual spaces, are crucial for understanding the period between the first century BCE and the fourth century CE as a time of religious diversity and complexity in the Roman Empire.

Sanctuaries in the Roman World: A Plethora of Choices and of Ritual Practices

What for lack of a better term we call the pagan sanctuaries of the Roman period are naturally the ritual spaces for which we have the fullest archaeological record. These are to a high degree recognizable through numerous defined architectural elements, which combine to make up similar or at least recognizable layouts (Raja 2015a: 308). Such spaces were first and foremost structured around one or several altars. In Roman religion and a number of other religious spheres, altars were the focal point of ritual

attention (Busch and Schäfer 2009). The altar was where the sacrifice took place and the sacrifice was the focus of religious rituals in Antiquity. Second, the temple, the house of the god from where the god in the form of cult statues could watch the rituals, became the focus of architectural attention at an early point (for Etruscan sanctuaries, see Hesberg et al. 2015: 235–50, esp. 241–4). However, in principle, a sanctuary could exist without a temple. It was the altar, the place where the sacrifice took place, which was the indispensable and central element (Raja 2015a: 308).

Altars could vary extensively in size, from monumentalized versions to miniature ones. Some altars were architecturally monumentalized and took the shape of proper buildings. In some cases, the top of the altar, where the sacrifice took place, was only attainable by a staircase. This was the case, for example, in the Roman-period sanctuary of Jupiter Heliopolitanus in Baalbek (modern Lebanon), where the two monumental altars in front of the Jupiter Heliopolitanus temple hovered in front of the temple's steps (Aliquot 2009: 129–54) (Figure 8.1).

Altars could also be portable, and miniature versions are also well known. Such small examples might either have been used as votives (gifts for the gods) or for performing offerings when one was travelling or in domestic settings (Lichtenberger et al. 2013). Altars were often placed centrally within the sanctuary and a sanctuary could hold several altars. Sometimes a sanctuary would have several main altars and, in addition, often several votive altars added over time by various dedicants (Ekroth 2010: 80–4).

FIGURE **8.1** View of one of the monumental altars in front the Jupiter Heliopolitanus temple in Baalbek, Lebanon

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Types of Sanctuaries in Various Settings

Although the focus in this chapter is Roman-period sanctuaries, sanctuaries earlier than the imperial period are important to touch upon in order to understand the scholarly debates, which have surrounded these complexes (Parker 2015; Van Andringa 2015). Sanctuaries were founded for a number of reasons: in response to natural phenomena or a particular event, such as a victory in war or battle; as a sign of gratitude to a god; or simply in connection with the founding of or expansion of a site (urban or non-urban). Sanctuaries in the Roman period were to a large extent places where euergetism (public benefaction) was exercised and displayed. In this way, sanctuaries were spaces where politics, civic life, and religion mixed on several levels. Members of the elite or the city council could dedicate sanctuaries or parts of them—a temple, an altar, or porticoes (Raja 2013). Sanctuaries thus became places of public display of wealth and religious affinities, as well as political agendas (Pollini 2012). No sanctuary can be said to have been a purely religious or ritual space.

Fundamentally, we may distinguish between two kinds of sanctuaries, namely, natural sanctuaries and constructed sanctuaries. Natural sanctuaries were often attached to particular natural features, such as springs (Sauer 2005; De Cazanove 2015: 186), lakes (Testart 2013), rivers (Besombes and Barrandon 2003–2004), caves, or woods. These sanctuaries could also come to hold constructed features, such as temples, altars, border stones, and perimeter walls (De Cazanove 2015). Where there were people, there was human influence on nature from an early period onwards; natural environments did not stay entirely natural. Rivers, at the mouth or on the banks of which sanctuaries could be placed, were manipulated by human activity so that their resources could be exploited. This was the case in Gerasa, for example, where the river played an important role in the agricultural life of the city, but also came to hold a religious importance for the city and its hinterland (Raja 2012: 137–82; Lichtenberger and Raja 2016). In the famous case of Antioch, Tyche, the protective goddess of the city, was displayed both in sculpture and on coins as treading on the River Orontes, a powerful image of the divine protection of the city from the uncontrollable river (Meyer 2006). Thus, in some cases, the natural environment and topography came to be reflected in the religious landscape and life of a community. Landscapes, including groves and caves, were frequently described by ancient authors as places where the presence of gods could be felt:

> A grove full of incredibly tall, ancient trees, shutting out a view of the sky by a veil of pleached and intertwining branches, the thick unbroken shade and the seclusion of the spot, will prove to you the presence of a deity and will not a deep cave deeply move your soul by a certain intimation of the existence of god?

This quote from Seneca (*Ep*. 41.3, Neudecker 2015: 223) is just one example of an ancient author who writes on the impact of nature on religious sentiments. Sacred gardens

in and around temple complexes have been excavated in recent years (Neudecker 2015: 227) and we may assume that such landscaping was much more common than we realized until recently. Private sacred gardens also existed (Neudecker 2015: 228). Unfortunately, such features are difficult to make out in the often-incomplete archaeological record. Complexes such as these need to be revealed with a more or less complete set of features in order to be recognized, as was the case of the garden of Octavius Quartio in Pompeii, where a nymphaeum located in an artificially created cave fed a long pool. At the top of the nymphaeum stood a pavilion dedicated to the goddess Diana (Spinazzola 1953: 369–421). In this case, a sacred space that was dedicated to the goddess of hunting, nature, and fertility was located in a private space where only invited visitors could take part in veneration: making sacrifices or simply enjoying the presence of divine figures. Also in Pompeii, the Garden of Hercules offers evidence of a cultivated landscape that was used for the veneration of deities (Neudecker 2015: 228; see also Laforge 2009: 150). Outside an aedicula which housed a cult statue of Hercules stood an altar under a tree. Around the altar small terracotta figurines, which had been offered, were found. Whether or not the offerings had been made to Hercules cannot be determined. However, it is clear that cultic activity took place at the altar and was performed repeatedly over a period of time. Natural landscapes and cultivated gardens could, therefore, function as ritual spaces and sanctuaries in themselves, both temporarily or for longer periods of time. Situations such as those outlined above serve to illustrate the complex relationship between religious life, sanctuaries, and ritual in Antiquity, and they require us to approach the issue with care and an eye for detail.

Sacred spaces where rituals were performed were also found in domestic contexts, though such spaces would not be considered 'private' in the modern sense. The complex intertwining of 'public' and 'private' spheres and their respective rituals have been dealt with in recent literature (Bowes 2015). The *lararia* (house altars) of domestic contexts as well as shrines in kitchens can be considered ritual spaces (for Pompeii, see Fröhlich 1991; Foss 1997; for Ostia, see Bakker 1994).

Constructed, architecturally defined sanctuaries often came into being together with other built spaces within growing villages, towns, and cities, but they are also found outside urban spaces, in suburban (Raja 2012: 168–9) or in extra-urban settings (Dentzer-Feydy et al. 2003). The so-called Birketein complex, located 1.2 kilometres to the north of the Decapolis city of Gerasa, has been interpreted as a suburban sanctuary complex (Raja 2012: 168–9). This complex consists of two large stepped pools that were connected to each other (Figure 8.2).

Slightly to the west of the pool was a small theatre. A sixth-century CE inscription on a gate on the way to the complex testifies to the fact that even in late Antiquity the Maiumas cult was practised here (Lichtenberger and Raja 2016: 98–115). The complex was situated close to the main road leading to the north from the city, and thus the road may have served as a processional route to the sanctuary at various points in time, when festivals took place at the complex. (See Luginbühl 2015, for processions and festivals in general.)

FIGURE **8.2** View of the stepped pools at Birketein outside of ancient Gerasa

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Extra-urban sanctuaries are also well known. Such sanctuaries could serve a multitude of purposes: (1) for recurrent religious festivals, and as starting or end points for religious processions (Stavrianopoulou 2015); (2) as places for travellers to make a stop; or (3) for gatherings, which were sometimes reserved for a particular group of people (Elsner and Rutherford 2005). They were connecting points and places where people from all over could meet in a sacred setting, often protected by sacred laws. In this way they provided secure spaces while also having a religious function (Dondin-Payre and Raepsaet-Charlier 2006). Processions can be viewed as a ritual context of some duration and could include several stages of ritual action, taking place at various points on the route, within and outside sanctuaries and along the way (Graf 1996; 2011).

Most common in Antiquity were urban sanctuaries. Urban sites could hold a number of sanctuaries, all active at the same time. Such sanctuaries would in themselves have been central elements in the shaping of religious memory in a city, and each sanctuary would have added to the religious knowledge held in a place, both within the sanctuary itself and in the urban site. How such knowledge was conveyed, either written and/or orally, often remains elusive to us, except when written sources, such as a calendar or decrees, inform us (Smith 2015: 367–9). Architecturally defined sanctuaries within urban settings are, together with walls and houses, key monuments in the urbanization process across the Mediterranean region. From an early point, such features mark the development of the city-state (Smith 2015: 364).

Architecturally defined sanctuaries underwent change over time (Raja 2015a: 308–11). They were not static features, and a number of agents could have had an impact on how these monuments developed and were shaped. Changes in the layout and the overall development may sometimes be tracked through archaeological investigations of such cult sites. It is difficult, however, to link such changes directly to developments in rituals or religious practice (see Insoll 2004, for reflections on the relationship between archaeology, ritual, and religion). Furthermore, the question of to what extent ritual and ritual practice may be read in the archaeological record remains one of the main issues in archaeology (Insoll 2004; see Raja and Rüpke 2015b, for an attempt at approaching the archaeology of religion and ritual from a lived religion perspective). Some expressions of ritual practice can be more easily read in the archaeological evidence than others. This includes installations for offerings, such as altars, as well as houses of the gods, such as temples, and the images of the gods in the shape of surviving cult statues (Graf 2007). Nevertheless, such installations do not tell us much about the way in which the rituals were actually performed. Nor do they tell us anything about the duration or frequency of such performances.

The topic of understanding rituals as experiences is a fairly new way of approaching rituals among archaeologists (Huet 2015). Nevertheless, it has long been acknowledged that taking part in a ritual stood at the core of civic and religious identity formation in Roman religion, and that various levels of communication were involved in such rituals (Rüpke 2012). Roman religion was to a high degree governed through the structuring of time, namely, the Roman calendar and its description of religious events, which would include sacrificial ritual (Rüpke 2011). Time and ritual were intertwined in Roman religion, and rituals gave structure to the world. Therefore, sanctuaries, which were the stages for rituals, were central elements in the practice of Roman religion, both in and outside Rome (Smith 2015: 366). However, it remains elusive to us as to whether religious memory was maintained through the Roman religious calendar. Some scholars speak more of maintaining cultural memory than preserving collective memory, which would have stretched across the festival or ritual time (Smith 2015: 366). Cultural memory in such a context would have meant a memory, which was not necessarily sustained by everyone, but maintained and nursed by a group of individuals, often belonging to the so-called elite or upper class of society, or in some cases individuals chosen or educated for the purpose of sustaining the cultural memory, such as the Vestals in Rome. In such contexts, the cultural memory could be shared with a larger group at certain points in time through certain activities, but would not necessarily be part of a larger collective memory.

In the context of maintaining knowledge and creating memory, including ritual memory, the so-called Mystery cult sanctuaries present a particular case (Nielsen 2014; 2015). Such cults, including those of Mithras and Isis, were exclusive cults into which only certain people were allowed (Nielsen 2015: 283–8). In the case of the cult of Mithras, only men, sometimes connected to the Roman military and sometimes to the local elite, were allowed (Clauss 1990; 1992; Rieger 2004; Gawlikowski 2007) (Figure 8.3).

While the Isis cult allowed both male and female members, we do not know who qualified for membership (Bricault et al. 2007; Kleibl 2009). Since the rituals of such

FIGURE 8.3 Detail of the Mithraeum at Hawarte, Syria

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Mystery cults were secret to outsiders and sometimes to members at certain levels of the cult, we do not know much about them in the ancient literary sources. Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* offers a detailed description of Isiac ritual practices, but the fictional nature of the work raises questions about how accurate the descriptions of the cult and its practices are. The buildings of these groups leave few traces of the exact ritual practice. Mithraea are usually furnished with dining benches along the walls and a centrally placed cult image of Mithras slaying the bull, and sometimes an altar (Clauss 1990; 1992), indicating that meetings would include, as many cults did, a ritual meal, perhaps preceded by a sacrifice performed at the altar.

Sources for Ancient Sanctuaries and Rituals

Various kinds of sources address access to sanctuaries in the Graeco-Roman period and the measures that had to be undertaken in order to become pure enough to enter a sanctuary (Gordon 2015; Smith 2015). More regulatory inscriptions come from the Greek world than from the Latin (Roman) world (Gordon 2015: 195), but whether this indicates greater importance given to regulations in the former, we cannot say. The evidence

remains scattered, and it is not clear the extent to which regulations were enforced. However, it is clear that Greeks and Romans reflected on who, when, and why people were allowed to enter sanctuaries, or not, and about the consequences of violating such regulations (Chaniotis 2004; Deshours 2006; Gawlinski 2012; Gordon 2015: 198). One famous description of a sanctuary in the Roman East, its decoration, and the rituals performed there comes from Lucian in his *De Dea Syria*. Whether we should take this source at face value remains under discussion, but Jane Lightfoot has offered convincing arguments that the text should be taken seriously and is more than simply a satirical text (Lightfoot 2003).

Otherwise, detailed literary sources are scarce. Ritual objects, on the other hand, may tell us much more about ritual practice than is usually appreciated. The so-called banqueting tesserae from Palmyra constitute a body of evidence that gives us insight into the structure of religious banquets held within sanctuaries in Palmyra. These tesserae have implications for understanding the structure of the Palmyrene priesthood better than the evidence offered by the written sources, for example. They tell us about the use of spaces within sanctuaries by a variety of religious groups, which, without these small objects, are not visible to us in the archaeological evidence (Raja 2015b; 2015c). Thus, a variety of sources might give some insight into how sanctuaries were used for a range of rituals by different religious groups. The ritual reality of Antiquity was more complex than the architectural layouts alone reveal.

In the art of the Graeco-Roman period, images of rituals were common. Roman art in general was concerned with the concept of religion and religious experience. This was often expressed through the depiction of rituals and ritual practice, either in action or in more indirect terms through scenes depicting the results of acts of impiety, for example, the revenge of the gods against Laocoön and his sons in the famous Roman-period sculpture group. Depictions of ritual actions could show, for example, a priest or people in civic clothing conducting a sacrifice at an altar within a sanctuary perimeter or outside (Busch and Schäfer 2009). Religious processions could also be depicted, such as on the well-known Ara Pacis in Rome (Zanker 1990: 117–21). Some scholars go so far as to state that no aspect of Roman monumental art was without some religious implication (Ryberg 1955).

Representations of rituals were often shown on the ritual objects themselves, either as reliefs or through depictions of the elements that were used for sacrifices, such as the libation pitcher or *patera* that appears on many altars in Rome (Siebert 2015). Monumental depictions of religious processions were also ways in which ritual space and performance could be remembered in the public and sacred spaces (Zanker 1990: 117–21). Rituals in Roman religion were about structuring the world and making hierarchies clear (Rüpke 2001). Roman religion, as practised in Rome, differed from Roman religion as practised in other parts of the Roman Empire. Local festivals would have mattered more to indigenous populations than those in Rome (in the case of Oinoando, for example, see Wörrle 1988).

One form of worshipping, performing rituals, and sacrificing that took place across the Roman Empire was the worship of the Roman emperor and his family. Emperor

worship created a common religious focus that stretched from the East, where it was strong, to the West, where it might have been weaker due to the lack of earlier ruler cults, for which the Hellenistic regions were well known (Price 1984; Raja 2012). Such worship could manifest itself quite differently according to the local situation. Often altars were put up to honour the emperor or his family, sometimes temples and complete sanctuaries were constructed, and, quite commonly, in other cases the ruler cult could be incorporated into existing sanctuaries.

Rituals in the Roman world most often took place in open spaces. Rituals were performed both within the perimeters of sanctuaries or at altars. Altars were placed in various locations. They were often found outside of traditional architecturally defined sanctuaries. The altar was the central focus of ancient rituals, as noted above, since the sacrifice always took place at an altar. Without an altar there would be no ritual and no sacrifice as part of the ritual. Therefore, ritual spaces were also found outside of the sanctuaries. A wide range of people could attend or watch rituals, which took place in public spaces, sometimes enclosed within the perimeter walls of the sanctuaries. Spectators and participants could include priests, citizens, children, women, freedmen, freedwomen, slaves, and foreigners (Huet 2015). A sacrifice could also take place in a private domestic space at a house altar (*lararium*) (Bodel 2008; Dubordieu 2012; Parker 2015; Sofroniew 2016).

An architecturally defined sanctuary may be described as a larger monumentalized space, often marked by architectural features, which in principle were there to create a setting for the altar or altars. The gods were thought to watch the rituals, and did so in the shape of the cult statues that stood in the temples. The temple doors were left open during the performance of the rituals in order for the gods to receive the sacrifice as well as for the spectators to catch a glimpse of the god (Estienne 2001; Hesberg et al. 2015; Raja 2015a). Not everybody would have been allowed into the temple, as access to temples was restricted to priests and specially invited people. People could in fact be punished for entering temples, if they were prohibited from doing so, either by people or by the gods themselves (Gordon 2015).

Sanctuaries were, as mentioned above, one of the institutional factors that constituted the early city-state and continued to be of importance throughout time and throughout the Mediterranean region. Ritual practice is assumed to have taken place there. However, often it is difficult to access the exact nature of such rituals, if they are not described by ancient sources and handed down to us. Even then, we might be faced with difficulties of knowing whether or not or to what extent these texts were in fact describing constructed events or rituals as they were really performed. On the other hand, we must assume that sacred spaces really did exist, as required by particular ritual actions and practices. There would have been no need for particularly articulated spaces, if there had been no such practices. This is where theoretical approaches enter the scene and might provide insight into ways of viewing and understanding ritual spaces.

Theoretical approaches to understanding sacred and ritual spaces have developed rapidly in the last few decades. The term 'sacred space' was once defined as simply a

place which was of a certain importance (Rüpke 2016: 69). Though straightforward, such an understanding of sacred space limits the theoretical approaches that can be applied to such spaces. The underlying assumption was that people, groups, or individuals respond to something that they intuitively regard as 'sacred' and that the performance of rituals was a way such intuitions and concomitant feelings could be expressed. Now, however, new suggestions of how to understand sacred spaces have appeared. One way of unlocking ritual spaces is to approach these as spaces where 'lived religion' took place.

Since the 1980s, the concept of 'lived religion' has been used to analyse contemporary religion (Orsi 2002). Such an approach has been further developed by Meredith McGuire in her book, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (2008), and it now guides approaches to ancient materials and religious spaces in situations where individuals and groups appropriate religious and ritual spaces (Raja and Rüpke 2015a; 2015b). With this approach, focus shifts from looking at ritual spaces exclusively within the framework of spatial analysis or as linear in their development. Rather, ritual spaces are approached as spaces that were used by a variety of individuals and groups, who would have had different understandings of the spaces and different agendas for these spaces. The complexities of ritual spaces are thus acknowledged and presumably better understood. Shifting the focus from 'what was a ritual space?' or 'what constituted a ritual space?' to 'when was a ritual space a ritual space?', we now have the possibility of viewing these spaces as spaces whose significance altered, depending on who used them, viewed them, created them, and cared for them. Such a shift in focus, one engaging with the lived qualities of these spaces and the involved agents, has proved useful and provided new insights into the changing natures of ritual spaces. Jörg Rüpke recently made an important observation, emphasizing that sacred space came to have value only through the use of ritual (2016: 71). Sacred space could not exist without ritual and without rituals being enacted. Through action and through actual lived religion, space was transformed from being sacred space into ritual space. Certainly, the situation was not that simple; a number of agents would have been involved in these processes, which would have differed from space to space. However, here it suffices to emphasize that religious experience and the theories evolving around such experiences must have centre-stage in any understanding of ritual spaces in Antiquity. Simply stated, ritual space was created through action and experience.

Conclusion

When considering Roman-period sanctuaries and the rituals performed there, we need to look at them in a broad perspective and across vast regions. Not all rituals bound together subjects of the Roman Empire. Some rituals were specific both in time and in space. The Roman Empire was diverse and was not given to unity or unified religious practice at local levels. Many regions had been given local autonomy to govern, which included autonomy in the religious life.

Central to Roman religion was the active practice of rituals. Such practice was in many ways strongly connected to keeping track of time. Regarding Roman-period sanctuaries, as much as they had common, recognizable features, they were often distinguishable from each other by their local traits, both in architecture and decorative schemes. No two sanctuaries were alike. Sanctuaries could differ in size; they could be small and for exclusive groups only, or they could cover vast spaces within or outside cities. Cities would often have one or more main sanctuaries. In the case of multiple sanctuaries, there could be competitions at times over their lavishness, a reflection of their supporters' wealth and importance in local civic society. Sanctuaries were not only sacred spaces but also spaces that were used for a variety of activities at various points in time. The actual activities, which would have taken place in these spaces, can be difficult to see in the architectural layout.

Sanctuaries could be urban, suburban, or extra-urban. These categories, which to a certain extent are artificial categories, help us to visualize the location of a given sanctuary. Also, a sanctuary's location had an impact on the ways in which it was used at a given point in time. Whatever their location, sanctuaries were also often meant for different groups of people. We distinguish between private and public in ancient religion, and divide sanctuaries according to these modern terms, although the domestic and civic did not cover all situations encountered in Antiquity. We can classify sanctuaries further through both architectural analysis and determining what the ancient sources say about how exclusive sanctuaries were. There are many cases, however, in which a sanctuary's architectural layout does not reveal how its space was used. Here other categories of material evidence are useful. Attention to all categories of evidence, therefore, is essential to the task of analysing ancient ritual and sanctuaries in Antiquity.

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CHAPTER 9

ASSOCIATIONS, GUILDS, CLUBS

JOHN S. KLOPPENBORG

Introduction

Life in the cities and towns of the Hellenistic and Roman periods was organized around two poles: the *polis* or town, and the family, each with its distinctive structure, organization, membership, and rituals. Between these two axes there existed a large number of more or less permanent private associations, guilds, and clubs. These were variously organized around a variety of practices or identities: a common cult (cult associations); a diasporic identity (diasporic associations); or a common occupation (occupational guilds). Still others were neighbourhood clubs or associations connected to a large household (*collegia domestica*). These are heuristic rather than discrete categories; almost all associations had cultic aspects; most held monthly (or more frequent) meetings and/or banquets; many assumed the responsibility of providing for, or assisting with, the funerals of members; and many had formal rules governing admission, dues, and the behaviour of members. Early Christ-groups were regarded by observers as varieties of associations, and Judaean *synagōgai* are easily seen as examples of diasporic associations, formed around a common ethnic identity and a common cult.

The primary sources for knowledge about associations are epigraphical and papyrological, with occasional data from literary sources. The main genres represented include: association by-laws (*lex collegii*); foundations (records of endowments that establish an association for a specific, usually funerary, purpose); other bequests and endowments; membership lists (*alba*); accounts of income and expenditures; subscription lists; honorific and other decrees; funerary monuments; dedications; *grapheion* and tax documents; petitions; letters; announcements of the selection of a patron (*tabula patronatus*); announcements of dissolution of the club; and various civic decrees, decrees of praefects, and imperial rescripts.

Only a minority of these documents include ritual prescriptions. A few of the extant association by-laws allude to admission practices or include a calendar of the banquets; some even prescribe how much wine is to be offered to each membership class. But little

is said of the admission or meal rites or other weekly or monthly rituals themselves, it probably being assumed that such detail was unnecessary. It is more common to find rules that regulate behaviour at meals and sacrificial rituals. Some foundation documents and bequests mandate yearly commemorations of the donor or his or her family, but little detail of the commemorative rituals is provided. Nothing in the extant data about associations permits the assembling of the kind of dossier on ritual behaviour that includes descriptions of many features outlined by Grimes (1995: 24–39): spatial and material aspects of the rituals; ritual objects used; temporal aspects (beyond a few calendrical details); the personnel, their gestures, and dress; the ritual scripts employed, and the several other features outlined by Grimes as desiderata. Nevertheless, various types of ritualized behaviour are evidenced by associations, if by 'ritualized' one means practices that are performed, formalized, repetitive, differentiated from the ordinary, collective, and designed to mark association members as distinct from others (see Grimes 1990: 14) or, to take Grimes' later formulation, enactments that are embodied, condensed, and prescribed (2014: 195–6).

Many types of ritualized behaviour in associations mimicked political and, to a lesser degree, domestic rituals. In this sense, these can be treated as instances of ritual transfer—that is, the transfer of a ritual either from one geo-cultural area to another (for example, the adoption of the Roman funerary ritual of the *rosalia* in the Greek East), or the transfer of a ritual that had its 'home' in one political or social context to a different social context (Chaniotis 2009: 19–24). The rituals of associations largely belong to the second type. Since many associations represented non-elite persons, politically disenfranchised in the cities in which they lived, the mimicry of political rituals probably functioned both to create social imaginaries that connected them to the *polis* and to cement affective bonds.

In this chapter I will focus on ritual behaviour that is typical of a wide variety of associations. As is well known, most associations had regular meals or symposia, and most if not all took responsibility for contributing to, or even conducting the funerals of deceased members (and sometimes their families). Yet it is unclear that those rituals were sufficiently different from meals and funerals that occurred in other contexts to merit special mention here; they will be treated in other chapters (see Ascough, Chapter 12 and Gudme, Chapter 20 in this volume).

I will also ignore the rituals of a few distinctive groups: first, the specialized theatrical rituals of one of the most prominent forms of association, the professional guilds of the 'Artists associated with Dionysos' (*to koinon tōn peri ton Dionyson technitōn*), a very large, well-organized, and translocal guild of theatrical performers (see Aneziri 2003). And second, since the initiation rituals of the mysteries are treated in another chapter (see Martin, Chapter 19 in this volume), they will not be discussed here.

Ritual life in the ancient Mediterranean is perhaps best known not from inscriptions and papyri—our principal source of knowledge of cult associations and occupational guilds—but from visual depictions on cult vessels, frescoes, funerary reliefs and, in the case of Isis mysteries, from Apuleius's description in *Metamorphoses* Book 11. Such data are sadly lacking for most associations. For this reason, while it seems clear that

associations of all sorts engaged in ritualized behaviour, the particulars of most rituals can be inferred only from passing notices in epigraphical sources. This results in a very incomplete dossier on the ritual behaviour of associations. A few rituals, however, can be described in some detail.

Scrutiny

It is sometimes asserted that associations were mainly unconcerned to regulate or prescribe the moral conduct of their members and in this respect differ importantly both from *philosophiae* (philosophical schools) and early Christ-groups, which developed an ethical code for members (Meeks 1986: 114). This is in fact not entirely true: one of the regular features of entrance into a cult association was the ritualized vetting of the candidate, called the *dokimasia*. As early as the late fourth century BCE, the formal scrutinizing of candidates is attested in a decree of a group of (citizen) *orgeōnes* (sacrificing associates) devoted to the Thracian deity Bendis:

> So that there may be as many *orgeōnes* of the sanctuary as possible, it is permitted for anyone who so wishes to contribute … drachmae to become a member of the sanctuary and to be inscribed on the stele. Let the members vet (*do[ki]m[a]zein*) those who are to be inscribed on the stele, and hand over the names of those approved to the secretary in the month of Thargelion. (*IG* II^2 1361, 330–24/3 BCE, author's translation, *GRA* I)

The need for this decree arose from the fact that up to that time, admission to the association had been through family connections: fathers introduced sons. The decree signals a change in the admission procedures changed, now allowing membership to anyone who was able to contribute the appropriate fee. But a *dokimasia* was required.

This is a matter of ritual transfer. The use of *dokimazein* clearly evokes the practices of the Athenian *boulē* (council) in examining candidates for office. According to Aristotle, candidates for office underwent a *dokimasia* in order to determine whether they were legitimate and citizens (*Ath. Pol.* 55.3). This vetting examined the issues of paternity and deme affiliation, and inquired whether 'Apollo is Patroos and Zeus Herkios for him'—that is, whether the candidate had altars to Apollo Patroos and Zeus Herkios (Zeus of the hearth) in his house, and where those shrines might be (Lambert 1994: 213). He was also asked whether he had family tombs, was dutiful towards his parents, paid taxes, and had done military service. Other evidence suggests that the *dokimasia* included probity of life: Xenophon reports that the *dokimasia* inquired into whether the candidate had failed to honour his parents' graves (*Mem.* 2.2.13); Dinarchus' speech against Aristogiton raised a list of moral failings of the candidate (2.8–10); and Lysias' speech against Philon, who had presented himself for a *dokimasia*, catalogued the many moral failings of the candidate (31.1) (Adeleye

1983; Rihll 1995). A *dokimasia* was also employed in the case of foreigners who sought Athenian citizenship. The standard formula for granting citizenship expressly recalled the scrutiny: '[it was resolved] to give to NN citizenship, after having been scrutinized (*dokimasthenti*) in the *dikasterion* in accordance with the laws' (e.g. *IG* II^2 850.14–15 and many other inscriptions, author's translation).

Although little data exist on the actual procedure of the *dokimasia* apart from its location in the *dikasterion* (law court), Osborne argues that 'it is perhaps likely that the scrutiny was envisaged as a further and independent investigation of the worthiness of the candidate for citizenship, that is, an examination of the claim that he had demonstrated *andragatheia* (munificience) to Athens' (1981–83, 4: 166–7).

The regular appearance of the term in the *nomoi* of Greek cult associations suggests that this ritual was adopted from the *polis*. What the *dokimasia* in cultic associations looked like is impossible to tell from the simple use of the verb *dokimazein*. Since cult associations were generally small face-to-face groups that depended on a degree of mutual trust and willingness not only to contribute dues but also to support fellow members in need, the scrutiny likely inquired into probity of life, however that was measured.

References to the *dokimasia* recur in other associations, notably the famous Iobakchoi inscription, *IG* II^2 1368 = *GRA* I 51 (Athens, 164/65 CE):

> It is not allowed for anyone to become an Iobakchos unless he first register with the priest the customary notice and is vetted by a vote of the Iobakchoi (*dokimasthē hypo tōn Iobakchōn psēphō)*, if he appears to be worthy and suitable for the Bakcheion. (ll. 32–7, author's translation, *GRA* I)

As in the case of early Athenian decrees, the precise nature of the vetting in cultic associations is not explained, but it was likely associated with the meetings that occurred on the ninth of each month in a 11 × 18 m building now excavated between the Pnyx and the Areio Pagus on the western slope of the Acropolis, which contains the inscribed stele, an altar, and various Dionysiac reliefs. As the inscription makes clear, a vote at the meeting was required. The phrase 'if he appears to be worthy (*axios*) and suitable (*epitēdeios*)' (ll. 36–7) leaves little doubt that some sort of test was applied. Since the Iobakchoi engaged in Dionysiac performances, 'suitability' (*epitēdeios*) might have to do with the ability to perform in the play; but *axios* suggests a moral standard. A few lines later (ll. 53–5), it is stipulated that if the brother of a member applies, he likewise would have to undergo vetting.

Moral requirements for entrance into the association are even clearer in the case of *IG* II^2 1369.32–3, 34 (Liopesi [Attica], II CE):

> It is not permitted for anyone to enter this most holy assembly of *eranistai* without being first vetted (*dokima[ze]tō*) as to whether he is pure and pious and good (*ei esti ha[gn]os kai eusebēs kai ag[th]os*). Let the president, the *archeranistēs* [the chief officer], the secretary, the treasurers, and the syndics examine [the candidate]. (author's translation, *GRA* I)

Of special interest is the trio of qualifications, *hagnos kai eusebēs kai agathos*, since these all point in the direction of a moralizing of the association's membership rules. The appearance of *hagnos* (pure) as a requirement of new members by itself might suggest that some kind of cultic activity was part of the group's entrance ritual, since *hagnos* is typically associated with the prerequisites for entry into a shrine and participation in sacrifice, which in turn required abstinence from certain foods and acts, and ablutions (see Parker 1983).

The frequency with which *dokimazein* and its nominal forms appear in the by-laws of cultic associations—though not in occupational guilds—suggests that scrutiny of candidates for membership was a widespread and formalized practice. Although this does not appear to have had the marks of a rite of passage in the classic sense of an ordeal or the kind of 'hazing' that occurred in Mithraic initiation (see Martin, Chapter 19 in this volume), the *dokimasia* amounts to a ritual.

As Bell has insisted, rituals are not to be considered apart from their larger performative contexts: 'acting ritually is first and foremost a matter of nuanced contrasts and the evocation of strategic, value-laden distinctions' (1992: 90). Just as such gestures as kneeling do not simply symbolize or communicate submission but produce a submissive subject (Bell 1992: 100), the *dokimasia* produces a subject that is compliant with the ethical norms of the association. The practice itself imitates the *dokimasia* of Athens, conducted in the *dikasterion* (a site of enormous judicial power): it placed the candidate in the association's sacred space, subjected him to an interrogation, and decided the outcome by ritualized voting. This ritual thus produced a compliant subject, 'worthy' of the trust network into which he was now integrated.

At the same time the practice of the *dokimasia* gestured towards the *polis*, and replicated one of the essential structures of belonging in, and to, the *polis*. Enacting the *dokimasia* in a cult association within a Greek city was a way of performing membership, whether fictively or otherwise, in the city itself. That is, in the mimicry of a civic practice the member of the cult association embodied a critical value-laden distinction of the city; if, as in the case of the member of the Bendis and Bacchic associations of *IG* II^2 1361 and 1368, the members already belonged to Athenian demes, the mimicry of the civic *dokimasia* echoed the city's recognition of merit, especially important for cult groups that reverenced non-Athenian deities (Bendis) or deities that in the mid-second century CE still fell under suspicion by the Romans (Dionysos). If the association was comprised of metics (resident aliens), the adoption of the *dokimasia* was a way to signal allegiance to the governing and ideological structures of the city. Mimicking the *dokimasia* was a way to 'fit it'.

Naming, Placing, and Erasing

One of the most common practices of associations—not only cult associations but occupational guilds as well—was to mark membership by the practice of erecting a

membership list in a public space. These were located in front of temples, near shrines, in clubhouses, and perhaps on public thoroughfares. The creation of a roster was in many cases the result of a decree of the group. For example, in 236/5 BCE, the *thiasōtai* of Artemis Kallistē honoured their president with an olive wreath and woollen fillet, and decreed that a roster of members be inscribed along with the honorific decree:

> In the year that Kimon was archon, the month of Thargelion. The *koinon* approved the [following decree]: Whereas Sophron generously and ambitiously convoked the *thiasos* and provided it with a stele to be set up in the temple, wishing to enlarge the treasury (*koinon*) at his own expense; and in order that there might be a rivalry among those who wish to be benefactors to the *koinon* and that they might know that they shall receive thanks; for good fortune it has been resolved by the members of the *thiasos* to crown their *archeranistēs* [president] Sophron with a wreath of olive leaves and a woollen fillet; so that also henceforth those who are *hieropoioi* [sacrificers] at the sacrifices, when they announce the rites and perform the libations, shall crown him and announce this publicly: 'The *thiasōtai* crown their *archeranistēs* Sophron on account of his excellence and the piety he has shown to the Goddess.' If they do not announce this publicly, they will owe four drachmae sacred to the Goddess. And let them also inscribe the crown upon the monument. *vacat*. And they shall inscribe the names of all of members, the men and the women separately. (*IG* II^2 1297 = *GRA* I 24, author's translation)

As with the *dokimasia*, it is unknown exactly how the cutting and placement of the roster were ritualized, but it is almost inconceivable that its erection was not accompanied by an assembly, or sacrifices, or a procession, or a banquet, or some other bodily performance. That such public displays were essential is clear in the case of the *alba* of the large Roman occupational guilds that named elite patrons. Many of these patrons were not participating members of an association but rather 'honorary' members. Thus it is likely that the *album* was unveiled in the presence of those patrons and their patronage acknowledged with crowns, acclamations, and/or banquets.

The materiality and visuality of the roster warrant attention. Unlike many other types of inscriptions, which were inscribed *scripta continua* and for that reason not simple to read even by those who were fully literate, lists were *designed to be read*. Names were usually arranged vertically in columns, one name per line, with plenty of intercolumnar space, and sometimes alphabetized, making them much easier to access. In spite of very low levels of the kinds of literacy required to read, read in public, or write, 'list literacy' as Thomas (2009) calls it—the ability to identify one's name on a list with perhaps minimal assistance from another association member—was much more widespread.

The list is not simply an archival or bureaucratic product; not only does it place the members of the association in public view, but its spatial organization locates members within the organizational hierarchy. In the case of *IG* II^2 1297, the decree locates the members beneath their president, Sophron (whose name appears within the inscribed crown) and sorts the fifty-eight members into four columns, two for men and two for women. This arrangement communicates sometimes the internal

structure of the group. Other rosters use larger letters, either at the top of the plaque or on the cornice or in the *ansae* on the left and right to identify certain worthies. Some lists create subdivisions to mark various classes of membership: patrons, presidents/supervisors, *honorati*, dues-exempt persons (*immunes, asymboloi*), and finally the general membership. Others alphabetize the names, or organize them by the date of entry into the group. Each of these strategies of visual organization is designed to render the roster maximally legible. The list not only records members but *locates* them within the association and provides the viewer with a picture of how the group is organized, and its principal values.

Papyri provide a glimpse of the performative nature of the creation of a roster. By-laws of Egyptian associations had to be approved yearly, and this entailed the creation of a membership list appended to the by-laws. P.Mich. V 243 is one such list from the village of Tebtynis in the Fayûm during the principate of Tiberius. The list of names takes the form, 'I, N son of N, approve (*eudokō*)'. This rite simultaneously asserts the agency of each member to approve the by-laws, and submitted each member to the rules of the association, overseen by the president (*prostatēs*), who was thereby authorized to enforce behavioural rules.

Lists also marked exclusion. Many lists, especially from the Latin West, show erasures of names. Since most of these associations honoured deceased members at their funerals and designated the deceased by placing a *theta* in front of the name, the erasing of names cannot have been *mortis causa*. Although it is not clear in all cases why names were erased, it was sometimes for transgression of the by-laws of the group (as in the case of *CIL* 6.33885, Rome, time of Hadrian), or for failure to contribute dues, or a result of resignation (see *AE* [1929] 161 [Trebula Mutuesca, 60 CE]; *CIL* 6.9102 [Rome I CE]; *ILLPRON* 610 [Virunum, Noricum, II CE]). Erasure of this type is not fully comparable to the practice of *damnatio memoriae*, which usually concerned the name of an emperor (such as Gaius, Domitian, or Commodus), whose names were effaced from inscriptions following their deaths. It was, instead, an exclusionary practice that had immediate material consequences: the excluded person was no longer able to rely on the association for the benefits it provided, and was alienated from the social capital and prestige that membership in the association offered.

The related practices of vetting, naming, and erasing imply agency on the part of the association itself. Since the group *qua* association created and erected the roster, which often included the names of its patrons, benefactors, and *honorati* displayed prominently, the ritualized creation of lists which included such acknowledgements of benefactions can also be seen as a matter of negotiations of power between subaltern groups and the elite. As Gordon observes:

> We can trace the descent of patronage networks down through the structures of local city government to the micro-level of the *patroni* of professional corporations. But the operation of patronage as a system is quite independent of the existence of formal titles. Anyone in a position to accord or withhold favours, distribute rewards or sanctions, can act in the manner of a patron at the micro-level. (2001: 257)

The production of a list that included patrons who are not ordinary members is not simply a matter of due acknowledgement of largesse but an assertion of the agency of an association to recognize (or deny) the role of the elite, and thus to negotiate the place of the group within the city. For example, the erasure of the name of one of the patrons of a corporation of harbour pilots in Ostia (*CIL* 14.251, 193 CE) signals that association's agency in adjusting its place in the city's map of power. Ritual power was bi-directional.

List-making, like the *dokimasia*, is an instance of ritual transfer. Both Greek and Roman cities and towns exhibited a large variety of lists: Athens displayed the names of public benefactors, public debtors, persons granted citizenship, deserters, persons tried for homicide, war causalities, ephebes, magistrates, archons, demesmen, Panathenaic victors, and so on. Roman towns had consular *fasti* (lists of consuls), lists of augurs, senators, and lists of civic events (Bruun 2009). The production and unveiling of *alba* by associations (both cultic and occupational) are instances of mimicry, a practice adopted by subalterns as 'a form of resemblance that differs from or defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically' (Bhabha 1994: 68) and which allows the subaltern, by means of a form of 'camouflage' to 'fit in' and take advantage of the cultural benefits offered by the dominant culture. Since the overwhelming majority of members of occupational guilds were not citizens of the cities in which they lived—in the Latin West, most were freedmen and slaves—and many of those in cultic associations were resident aliens (male and female), freedmen/women, and slaves of both genders, this kind of mimicry was a means to signal in their own practices their allegiance to their host cities.

Rituals of Belonging

Angelos Chaniotis (2006: 229) has drawn attention to the high frequency of *syn-* compounds employed to name those who joined together to perform ritual actions of sacrifice, singing hymns, participating in a procession, dining, observing a festival, or otherwise acting piously towards the god. This observation applies just as well to the naming of associations, where we find a large number of *syn-* compounds: generic terms such as *synodos, synagōgē, synedrion, synētheia, synētheis, synoikia*; names that incorporate the names of deities: *Synanoubiastai, Synbakchoi, Synsarapiastai*; and names that indicate particular activities of the group: *synagōnistai, synathlētai, synthytai, synergasia, syntechnia, symmystai, synthrēskeutai, synklitai, synpragmateuomenoi, syssitoi*, and *symposiastai* (see Kloppenborg and Ascough 2011: index; Harland 2014: index). It might be added that the discourse of early Christian discourse reflects a similar density of *syn-* compounds used to describe key activities and persons: *synthaptō, syndoxazō, synapagō, synagōnizomai, synergos, synaichmalōtos, synergeō, synapothnēskō, synarmologeō, syndoulos* and even *systauroō*. It is obvious that 'being together' and 'belonging' were critical values and accordingly, ritualized actions that promoted a sense of belonging are likely to have been common in both associations and Christ groups. The premium

placed on belonging can be seen both in the penal codes of associations and in positive ritual practices.

Penal Practices

Many association by-laws impose fines for misbehaviour, including disorderly conduct, failure to attend meetings, failure of officers to implement the group's decisions, failure to assist a member in distress, striking or calumniating a fellow member, taking another member's seat, sexual interference with the member's family, and a host of other infractions. Rather than paying the fine to the injured member, it was normal to pay the fine to the association (or the 'deity', Arnaoutoglou 2003: 135–6). This implies that the association itself conceived itself as a victim of misbehaviour (Chaniotis 2006: 234).

So intent on preserving decorum and stigmatizing hostile relations, the Iobakchoi appointed a *eukosmos*, an officer charged with maintaining good order, and threatened him with fines should he not report to the priest any contraventions of order (*IG* II^2 1368.94–6). As Andrew Monson has observed apropos of demotic association rules, associations articulate a hierarchy of fines for misbehaviour, the highest being offences against fellow members—adultery with a member's spouse, and acts of violence against an office holder, or accusing a fellow member of being a leper (2006: 232). The net effect of such fines is to prioritize relations of trust and mutual respect within the group, and thus to underscore the association as a trust network (see Tilly 2010; Blockmans 2010)

Touching

Touching a ritual object served as a common means, especially in cultic associations, to signal compliance with the behavioural and cultic norms of the group. In a domestic association of Zeus from Philadelphia in the late Hellenistic period (*TAM* V 1539 = *GRA* II 117), as they entered the house, members took an oath:

> When entering this house let men and women, free people and house-slaves, swear by all the gods that they neither know nor make use wittingly of any deceit against a man or a woman, nor a poison harmful to people, nor harmful spells; or that they practise the use of a love potion, abortifacient, contraceptive, or any other thing fatal to children; or that they would recommend it to, nor connive at it with, another. No one should withdraw their goodwill toward this *oikos* [household], and if anyone should do any of these things or plot them, they are neither to put up with it nor to keep silent, but shall expose it and defend themselves.… The gods will be propitious to those who obey and will always give them all good things, whatever things gods give to people whom they love. But if any should transgress, they will hate such people and inflict upon them great punishments.

The group's practice involved touching the stele on which the *nomos* (by-laws) was written:

> During the monthly (?) . . . and annual sacrifices, may those . . . men and (?) . . . women who have confidence in themselves touch (*haptesthōsan . . . tēs graphēs tautēs*) this inscribed stone on . . . which the instructions of the god . . . have been written, so that those who obey these instructions . . . and those who do not obey . . . these instructions may become evident. (ll. 54–60, translation by Harland, *GRA* II)

This diagnostic act was intended to separate those who have obeyed the ordinances from those who did not. Interestingly, it attributes agency to the 'house' to protect itself and its purifications, cleansings, and mysteries (none of which is further explained) from contamination by punishing offenders. It is not difficult to see Paul's threats in 1 Corinthians 11:17–34 as operating with a similar ritual logic: the meal practice of the Corinthian Christ group is ascribed an agency, whereby (he claims) misuse of that practice leads to sickness and even the death of some of the offenders.

The communicative role of touching (as well as other intimate practices such as eating together) belongs to wider cultural contexts and its adoption by associations should be seen as a transfer of touching rituals to associative context. As Chaniotis (2006: 222–3) notes, reports of burials often assert that the deceased was buried 'with my own hands' or 'by the hands of friends'. Such touching of course communicated *miasma*, which eventually would have to be eliminated, normally after a short hiatus and by means of washing. Indeed, the proper disposition of the dead *required* that the deceased's family defile themselves by touching the corpse; for friends to do this was an act of great piety. Thus, it is not surprising that associations adopted similar practices as a way to demonstrate 'belonging'. An association rule from Tebtynis required members to defile themselves, adding that they must also shave their head:

> Whoever does not shave his head shall be fined 4 drachmae. Whoever does not defile himself (*mē miantheis*) (by participating in the funeral) or has not put a wreath at the tomb shall be fined 4 drachmae. (P. Mich. V 243.11, Tebtynis, time of Tiberius, author's translation)

Other texts point to the importance of ritualized touching. Chaniotis mentions several accounts of the bodies of distinguished civic benefactors being seized by crowds in order to give them a public burial, sometimes against the wishes of the family. And according to Plutarch, *Arist*. 12.3, the annual commemoration of the Battle of Plataia required the chief magistrate, ordinarily prohibited from wearing anything but white and from touching iron, to dress in purple, carry a sword and a pitcher of water, and to wash the stele commemorating the battle with his own hands (Chaniotis 2006).

Ritualized touching in associations should then be seen in the context of wider cultural touching practices that exposed the subject to various dangers—defilement, the agency of the 'house', or the wrath of the gods—all in the interest of affirming mutual

obligation, and 'belonging'. It is worth pointing out that for *TAM* V 1539 the perils from which participants were ritually protected by the touch are precisely those that would have undermined the integrity of the group as a trust network: adultery with another member's spouse; deceit; poison; harmful spells; love potions, abortifacients, or other substances fatal to children; conspiracies or the withdrawal of goodwill towards the *oikos*. That is, touching the stone (or in Paul's view, rightly enacting the communal dinner) are ways to promote and sustain group cohesion.

Honorific Rituals

Records of rites that honoured (external) patrons and peers who had performed their roles in exemplary fashion are among the most common epigraphical documents from the Greek East.

The decree of commendation assumed a stereotypical form consisting of: (1) the date of the decree; (2) the basis for the commendation; and (3) the resolution awarding a commendation; (4) mandating its announcement in the assembly; and (5) authorizing the erection of a stele. For example, *IG* II^2 1277 = *GRA* 15 (Athens, 278/7 BCE):

> (1) During the year that Demokles was archon, 17th of Mounichion, at the regular assembly, Noumenias proposed the following motion: (2) Whereas the supervisors (*epimelētai*) and the secretary (*grammateus*) who were appointed by the *koinon* during the archonship of Demokles have managed the sanctuary honorably and zealously and performed all of the sacrifices in accordance with ancestral traditions and laws, and adorned the [statue of the] goddess and constructed the original altar … [a list of further benefactions]; (3) for good fortune, it was resolved by the *thiasōtai* to commend the supervisors, Eukles, Thallos, and Zenon, and the secretary Ktesias and to crown each of them with an olive wreath; (4) Their crowns and commendations shall be announced at each of the sacrifices, along with the other benefactors; (5) The supervisors for the year following Demokles' archonship shall inscribe this decree on a stele and set it up in the sanctuary.
>
> [The *koinon* honours]
>
> Euklēs Zeno
>
> Thallos Ktesias (author's translation, *GRA* I)

What is obvious from this (and many other honorific decrees) is that the roles of supervisor (*epimelētēs*) and secretary (*grammateus*) were rotating positions (hence, the standard description, 'who were appointed by the *koinon* in the year that NN was archon'). This also implies that associations, like the Athenian assembly itself, afforded many or perhaps even all members the opportunity to be the subject of honorific decrees as they assumed the roles of supervisor or some other administrative role.

Although Woolf (1996: 32) is undoubtedly correct in stating that having one's virtues monumentalized in a stele was of great value and spoke to a widespread anxiety concerning 'fear of oblivion' and 'loss of the self', we should not suppose that all groups could

afford to have a stele inscribed for each honour conferred on a member. Honorific ritual in fact entailed not only (3) the formulation and vote on a decree by the assembly, but (4) an announcement of the honour at the next meeting, neither of which by themselves resulted in durable records. The excavations of the Mithraeum at Dura Europas have shown that in addition to formally inscribed inscriptions and dedications, there are a number of much less durable honorific texts painted or scratched on plaster, announcing the promotion of various members of the group to the ranks of *pater*, Persian, and *Miles* (Rostovtzeff, Brown, and Welles 1939, nos. 855–60; Francis 1975; Gordon 2001: 253).

There is little doubt that the honorific practices adopted in associations mimicked civic practices; the decrees of Athenian and Piraean cult associations essentially replicated the standard forms of bouletic inscriptions, appealing to the same set of virtues and beneficial acts: *aretē* (virtue), *philotimia* (zeal), *eunoia* (being well-minded), *dikaiosynē* (honesty), *kalokagathia* (munificience), *eusebeia* (piety), and the like. The same can be said of honorific inscriptions from associations on Delos and in Asia. Hence, as with the other rituals examined above, honorific rituals practised by associations had a double function: on the one hand, the *mimesis* of civic rituals served as a demonstration of the affinities between the city and the association members, many of whom were neither citizens nor able to become citizens. Indeed, in some cases, a non-elite association was the instrument by which a city enacted its decrees: in Apamaeia, the *dēmos* and *boulē* approved an honorific decree and mandated that a street association of handworkers erect the stele (e.g. *IGRR* IV 791 = *GRA* II 115; *c*.69–81 CE).

On the other hand, the transfer of civic rituals to the association allowed association members, alienated from civic honours, to perform their own honorific rites. The practice of cult associations such as *IG* II^2 1277 cited above, might appear to promote an egalitarian ideology. Officers were elected yearly, perhaps by rota, and awarded honours at the conclusion of their service. This mimicked the structure of Athenian democracy, where the tribes and demes participated in leadership by a pre-arranged pattern, allowing each to have a turn at the honour of leadership. In associations that mimicked Athenian (and Delian) practices, this produced a 'flat hierarchy'—that is, a hierarchical structure but one that was theoretically accessible to all members, in some instances, even slave members.

Yet as Gordon suggests apropos of Mithraic groups, honorific rituals had another effect. Initiation and honorific practices

> simultaneously confirmed the necessity and propriety of the unequal distribution of power and wealth in such a society, and, because it was a temporary, and within an order often reversible, relation, gave the impression that the distribution of those social goods was subject to the intervention of rational good-will. It has thus an important masking effect. (Gordon 2001: 256)

Ironically, perhaps, honorific rituals that seem at first glance to distribute honours evenly over the long run, nevertheless reinscribed status hierarchies as necessary and 'natural' parts of ancient society.

Asserting a Place in the City

About 410 BCE, Plato (speaking through Socrates' mouth), described witnessing a ritual procession in Athens of the Thracian goddess Bendis:

> I walked down yesterday to the Piraeus with Glaukon son of Ariston to offer prayers to the goddess [Bendis] and also because I wished to see how they would conduct the festival, since this was its inauguration. I thought the procession of the citizens to be very impressive, but it was no better than the show made by the marching of the Thracian contingent. After we had said our prayers and had seen the spectacles, we were starting for the Asty when Polemarchos son of Kephalos caught sight of us from a distance as we were hastening homeward and ordered his boy to run and have us wait for him … 'Do you mean to say,' said Adimantos, 'that you haven't heard that there is to be this evening a torchlight race on horseback in honour of the goddess?' 'On horseback,' I said, 'that is a new idea. Will they carry torches and pass them along to one another as they race with the horses, or how do you mean?' 'That is the way,' said Polemarchos, 'and besides, there is to be a night festival which will be worth seeing. For after dinner we will get up and go out and see the sights and meet a lot of the lads there and have a good talk. So stay and do as we ask.' (Plato, *Resp*. 327AB, 328A [Shorey, LCL]).

While for most association rituals we have to rely only on inscriptional evidence, the Bendis procession from Athens to the Piraeus is an exception. A ritual procession appears to be depicted on an early fourth-century relief discovered in Piraeus, probably in the ruins of the sanctuary of Bendis and now in the British Museum (inv. no. GR 1895, 1028.1). The relief depicts Bendis, dressed typically in a short chiton and tall boots, facing two bearded and draped officials, probably officers of the cult group, and behind them eight naked and barefoot youths. Since the first clothed figure carries a torch, it is likely that the relief depicts the beginning of the torch relay described by Plato.

The second piece of evidence is a lengthy inscription, *IG* II^2 1283 (240/39 BCE), which re-inaugurated the *Bendideia*, suppressed during the period between 295 and 262 BCE when Athens and the Piraeus were under separate and mutually hostile governments. The inscription mandates the devotees of Bendis, both from Athens (where a temple to Bendis had been built during the period of separation) and from the Piraeus, should assemble in Athens and process to the Bendis sanctuary in the Piraeus where they would be welcomed with sponges of water and a meal. The point of this procession is stated:

> so that the *orgeōnes* also may be seen to be obedient to the law of the city, which orders the Thracians to have their procession continue to the Piraeus … so that when these things take place and the entire *ethnos* lives in concord, the sacrifices and other rites shall be made to the gods, in accordance both with the ancestral customs of the Thracians and the laws of the city and so that it will go well and piously for the entire *ethnos* in matters concerning the gods. (*IG* II^2 1283.9–12, 22–6, author's translation, *GRA* I)

The ritual movement of two sets of devotees is a ritual of *homonoia*, concord, understood not only as the concord between two Bendis groups that might otherwise have been rivals, but also between Athens and its port, now united following the reunification of the city. The non-elite Bendis group played a key role in the enactment of civic reunification.

This ritual, performed by the devotees of Bendis, but serving as a civic spectacle because of its dramatic character illustrates the way in which subaltern groups could perform their allegiance to their host city and simultaneously preserve and even valorize aspects of their ethnic identity as Thracian metics. Comparable ritual processions that signalled the concord between two adjacent towns are attested elsewhere (Graf 1996; Herda 1996).

Occupational guilds also joined in civic processions. Perhaps the best known of these was the *dendrophoroi*, associated with the cult of Silvanus and Cybele in the West and perhaps also woodcutters or woodworkers, whose main ritual function involved the cutting, decoration, and carrying of a pine tree in a procession on 22 March in memory of Attis, attested not only in Rome but in several provincial towns (Van Nijf 1997: 195–7). Although they were mainly slaves and freedmen, the association's tree ritual was probably introduced by Claudius, and thus allowed the dendrophores a way to enter public view in dramatic procession, to insert themselves into the visual map of the city, and to reinforce their own sense of group identity.

Another occupational guild, the '*koinon* of Berytian Poseidoniastai' participated in a civic procession in honour of Apollo (whose birthplace was Delos). The association decreed that in recognition of the benefactions provided by a Roman banker, Marcus Minatius, his largesse be acknowledged in a proclamation at each of their monthly meetings and that at the festival of Apollo the bull that the group led in the procession be draped with a sign stating 'The *koinon* of Berytian Poseidoniastai [offers this] on behalf of Marcus Minatius, son of Sextus' (*ID* 1520.51–2, 153/2 BCE).

As Chaniotis observes, civic festivals and processions were emotion-laden rituals that served to create a civic identity: they brought together all constituencies of the city, magistrates, councillors, ephebes, priests, slaves, workers, but also 'opponents in law-suits, the debtor and the creditor, the cheated husband and his competitor, the young man in love and the beauty who ignores him' (Chaniotis 2006: 213). The festival of Apollo on Delos provided an appropriate space for these Syrian traders to assert their loyalty, both to Delos and to the Romans who after 166 BCE controlled Rome via Athenian administrators, and to advertise their existence as a group able to accord honours, recognize largesse, and to participate in the ritual life of the city.

Seen in this way, the participation of occupational guilds and cultic associations (the Poseidoniastai were both) in Delian processions functioned as a ritual that integrated diverse groups into the fabric of the *polis*. Yet it served another function. As individual shippers and warehouse men from Beirut, the Poseidonists carried little weight and had only meagre social capital. As an association, however, marching in a civic parade, probably carrying their banners, and leading a decorated ox for the sacrifice, they asserted

their place in the city and created for themselves social capital. As Ramsay MacMullen observed of such displays, as a group,

> they [occupational guilds in general] might then see their festival days inserted in the city's official calendar, themselves given seats of their own in the municipal amphitheater, and their titles inscribed on stone for their contributions to some civic improvement. No one smiled at their pretensions when their banners paraded through the streets in homage to a god or emperor; no one found their honorific decrees or their emphatically advertised votes of thanks, even to personages miles above them socially, in the least ridiculous. (1974: 76)

Whether Christ-groups in the first two centuries ever engaged in such demonstrations of 'belonging' is unknown. Yet Ignatius of Antioch, in referring to himself and other with terms *theophoroi* (god-bearers), *naophoroi* (temple-bearers), *christophoroi* (Christ-bearers), and *hagiophoroi* (bearers of holy things, Ign. *Eph*. 9.2), analogous to the many *-phoroi* roles of Greek processions, seems at least to *imagine* participation in such a procession (see Harland 2009: Chapter 2).

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CHAPTER 10

HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY

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Introduction

Throughout the republican and imperial periods, religion was central to Roman domestic life. Cicero, a leading philosopher and statesman of the late Republic, considered the rituals observed in the domestic sphere to be essential. In his treatise on laws for an ideal state, he repeatedly asserts that domestic rites, which he calls *sacra* or *ritus familiae*, must be preserved and passed down to future generations (*Leg.* 2.19, 22, 47). *Sacra familiae* encompassed the religious ceremonies and festivals performed by and for members of the *domus*, the urban, upper-class household, which was typically comprised of a freeborn married couple, their children, slaves, and freed dependants all living in the same house under the authority of a male head. Location, however, was not the defining factor but the people, practices, and objectives instead, for *sacra familiae* included rituals that took place in the house itself as well as ones celebrated at temples and tombs, and some that occurred in both domestic and civic spaces. This rich and varied set of practices can be grouped into three categories: (1) routine, perhaps even daily, rituals to tutelary deities and other gods of import to the household; (2) lifecycle rituals or *rites de passage* celebrating birth, coming of age, marriage, and death; and (3) annual festivals that focused mainly on the dynamics between freeborn and slave members of the *domus* and relations between the living and the dead.

Given the diverse membership of an upper-class household, it is not surprising that *sacra familiae* primarily reflect concerns about its welfare and future prosperity. These rituals concentrated on the inner workings of the *domus* in terms of relationships between individual members, such as parents and children or spouses, and between subgroups such as freeborn members and slaves. Collectively and individually, *sacra familiae* sought to promote unity among household members and foster a community of identity based upon normative social values and beliefs, particularly regarding gender and juridical status, as well as ideals such as *concordia* (harmony) and *pietas* (reciprocal devotion) that were esteemed within the family and prevalent in society more generally

(Dolansky 2006). As a result, domestic rites were arguably powerful mechanisms of socialization especially for younger members and newly acquired adult slaves. These rituals also fulfilled a second and related critical social function with respect to the present and future well-being of the *domus*. They offered opportunities to address tensions and anxieties that arose within the household due to differences in gender and status specifically, and even to contest social structures in the safety of defined space and time; this enabled tensions to be mitigated and diffused, and the hierarchical character of the Roman household, which was largely shaped by age, gender, and juridical status, to be reaffirmed and normal protocols resumed (cf. Rao 2006: esp. 159–60).

This chapter aims to provide some cultural background for early Christian ritual through an overview of Roman domestic rites. Drawing on evidence primarily from the last century BCE and first two centuries CE, it offers representative examples from the three main areas outlined above: (1) regular worship of the gods at household shrines; (2) *rites de passage* marking changes through the lifecycle for individuals and the household as a unit, as illustrated by a freeborn boy's coming of age ceremony; and (3) observance of annual festivals focused on interactions among living members and with the dead, as demonstrated by the commemorative Parentalia festival. While establishing the social significance of domestic rites on a microcosmic level, thus for individual households, I hope to reveal the richness and vitality of these rituals. Much of the surviving evidence for domestic religion is literary and concerns the propertied classes in urban centres in Italy and Rome in particular, hence my focus on upper-class households. Evidence from the provinces, however, suggests some key domestic rites became well established in these milieux too. Imbued with practical and symbolic meaning for performers and observers alike, *sacra familiae* helped to cultivate core social values and to unite the household's diverse membership in a community of worshippers who shared a sense of common identity predicated upon long-standing traditions and beliefs.

Roman Civic and Domestic Religion: Similarities and Differences

In both civic and domestic spheres, the primary objective in worshipping the gods was to ensure their favour (*pax deorum*) and avert their anger in human affairs. Romans firmly believed in a relationship with the gods based on reciprocity and a contractual principle neatly encapsulated in the phrase *do ut des*, 'I give so that you may give'. In the civic sphere, the gods' favour could be secured primarily through prayer, sacrifice, or divination. Simply performing these acts, however, was insufficient unless they were performed with exactitude: Roman polytheism stressed the necessity of orthopraxy over orthodoxy in ritual affairs—proper practice rather than thought process. At the civic level, responsibility for religious matters resided chiefly with elite citizen males who were organized into four major priesthoods referred to as priestly colleges. All priestly

figures sought to maintain divine favour whether they were connected with specific festivals or had religious duties such as taking auspices or performing rites for making declarations of war. The Vestal Virgins, who belonged to the pontifical college, were exceptional in their capacity as civic priests for several reasons, not least because they were the only female office-holders and served full-time as priestesses of the goddess Vesta. In comparison, male priests were engaged only part-time in their priestly responsibilities as they held political and military offices concurrently with priesthoods, frequently enjoying prominent positions in all spheres simultaneously.

Roman society was paternalistic and public life was dominated by powerful elite men in all areas, including religion and despite the elevated status of the Vestals. Although Rome was a religious community in which all members contributed to the service of the gods, the leading roles were nonetheless reserved for men, albeit a small and select number. Priests conducted most significant ritual acts on behalf of the *res publica* (state), especially animal sacrifice. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that many civic rituals required both actors *and* audiences, and attending and observing ritual performances such as sacrifices and processions constituted important, indeed critical, forms of participation that should not be overlooked. As a microcosm of the state (Cicero, *Off*. 1.54; Pliny, *Ep*. 8.16.2), it is not surprising to find several similarities in the household's religious organization beginning with the *pater* (father) serving as its religious head and acting as a domestic priest of sorts while his wife, children, and slaves had various supporting roles. One feature that distinguished the *pater* was his capacity to perform sacrifices of any type on the household's behalf while his wife likely offered blood sacrifice herself infrequently, and his children appear only to have presented bloodless offerings (see Schultz 2006: 131–7; Flemming 2007; Hemelrijk 2009, for critique of women's 'sacrificial incapacity' contended by de Cazanove 1987 and Scheid 1992). The *pater* had authority over his dependants in religious matters, but his authority was not limitless, as some have maintained (Wissowa 1912: 33–4; Wachsmuth 1980: 48; Scheid 1992: 378, 404). His authority in this regard, moreover, was not clearly defined, particularly by legal sources (Sessa 2012: 73). Instead, parallel to the civic sphere with its collegial structure of priesthoods, informal mechanisms were in place to provide checks on the *pater*'s behaviour and promote group decision-making, such as in cases of *superstitio* (religious impropriety) discovered within the *domus* (Dolansky 2006: 24, n. 39).

Though there were many similarities religiously between the civic and domestic spheres, there were some notable differences. Animal sacrifice, which was prominent in civic rites, was less common in the domestic sphere. Likewise, processions, which were key components of civic festivals and often featured dancing and music in conjunction with parading a god's cult statue, were less frequently parts of domestic rites. Divination, the practice of ascertaining the will of the gods, was central to Roman politics and state religion such as the taking of auspices prior to elections or battles and the 'reading' of entrails from sacrificial victims to interpret prodigies. Though some divination occurred domestically, including consultation with astrologers and dream interpreters, it seems individuals normally engaged the services of diviners for their own purposes rather than on the household's behalf. Furthermore, some sources express

deep concerns about even admitting such practitioners into the domestic sphere (e.g. Cato, *Agr*. 5.4; Columella, *Rust*. 1.8.6, 11.1.22), and Constantine eventually banned them from practising in private houses altogether (Cod. Theod. 9.16.1; Beard, North, and Price 1998: 372).

Worship at Household Shrines

The worship of gods of special import to the household at shrines in the house or its garden was a staple of domestic religious life. These shrines are conventionally called *lararia* after the *lares familiares*, tutelary deities of the household, though republican and imperial authors do not use this term and refer instead to *sacraria* or *aediculae* (Orr 1978: 1576). Archaeological evidence particularly from towns around the Bay of Naples and the western provinces indicates shrines could take several forms. The most common were wall-niches and small shrines (*aediculae*), both of which could house statuettes of the *lares* and other gods. At Pompeii and Herculaneum, painted representations were also popular in place of architectural shrines. Regardless of type, *lararia* regularly included certain elements. Usually the *genius* or guardian spirit of the *paterfamilias* (male head of the household), which primarily represented his reproductive powers, is shown as a togate adult male in the act of sacrificing; less frequently his female counterpart, the *juno*, appears with him, representing the procreative powers of the *materfamilias* (female head of the household). The *lares*, who are generally a pair in visual and literary representations, are portrayed as young men wearing short, belted tunics and holding vessels used in sacrifice such as offering dishes and wine horns; they often flank the *genius*. Below them there is usually a snake, sometimes called the *agathon daimon* ('good spirit'); occasionally two snakes are depicted, one bearded to represent the generative powers of the *paterfamilias* and another unbearded to represent those of his wife.

Besides the *lares*, other gods could be included in a niche or aedicular shrine as statuettes or in painted form. These assemblages of deities, with or without the *lares*, comprised the *penates* or *di penates*, the household gods. In aedicular shrines at Pompeii, for example, many combinations that include the *lares* are attested, ranging from pairings with traditional Olympian gods such as Mercury, Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva to more exotic groupings with Egyptian gods such as Isis, Anubis, and Harpocrates, or combinations that might be considered 'erotic' as Bodel suggests of Venus, Priapus, and Eros (2008: 261). In the Gallic and Germanic provinces, a different picture emerges: bronze statuettes of Mars, Neptune, and Victory are very common while the *lares* are rarely represented (Sharpe 2014: 178). The diversity and seemingly personalized nature of the assemblages raise questions about who determined their composition. It is reasonable to assume the *paterfamilias*, but as Bodel (2008: 261) cautions, this is 'by no means certain'.

One of the *paterfamilias*' responsibilities was to ensure proper worship of the *lares* took place. Although some scholars maintain this meant him performing rites daily,

ancient sources only indicate that some form of regular worship was expected. Orr plausibly suggests that daily attention to the *lares* may have depended on the individual piety of *patresfamiliae* (1978: 1567). The prologue to Plautus' *Aulularia* ('Pot of Gold', 1–27), an early second-century BCE comedy, is insightful regarding ideals and actual practice while highlighting the importance of reciprocity in Roman religion. The *lar familiaris* begins by recounting how the grandfather of the current homeowner secretly buried a pot of gold in his hearth and prayed to the *lar* to guard it. The grandfather, a miserly man, did not tell his son about the gold before his death, much to the *lar*'s dismay. Once master of the house himself, the son honoured the *lar* less and less so the god neither revealed the treasure nor looked after him well. Following the son's death, his son Euclio similarly neglected the *lar*. Euclio's daughter, however, prayed to the god daily, offering gifts of incense, wine, and garlands. Because of her devotion, the *lar* decided Euclio should discover the treasure so he could give his daughter a proper wedding. A much later source, the Augustan poet Propertius (4.3.53–4), hints at procedures for worshipping the *lares* during a *paterfamilias*' legitimate absence. A fictional wife, Arethusa, laments that the *lararium* is closed while her soldier-husband is away and only open on the first of each month when a female slave tends it. This implies that Arethusa's husband made provisions for worship in his absence, and that perhaps when he was home the *lares* received more regular attention. Though these examples come from imaginative literature, they are highly suggestive of conventional attitudes and behaviour.

Literary evidence for how *patresfamiliae* honoured the *lares* on the household's behalf is limited, but references to individual sacrifices detail the sorts of offerings which were likely part of communal rites as well, namely, spelt, wine, incense, sacrificial cakes, and garlands (for ancient references, see Orr 1978: 1567, nn. 56–8). Sacrifice of lambs and pigs are known from literary sources (Horace, *Carm*. 3.23.4; Plautus, *Rud*. 1208; Tibullus 1.1.21–2), and paintings adorning *lararia* add further detail. One shows an attendant leading a pig to an altar while others allude to, and perhaps also commemorate, such sacrifices through representations of the edible products that might result in the form of hams and sausages (Fröhlich 1991: 261, 276, 292 = catalogue entries L29, L61, and L98).

One *lararium* is of particular interest for its unique portrayal of ritual. The shrine proper is a niche on the north wall of the kitchen in a Pompeian house (I.13.2) attributed to a woman named Sutoria Primigenia.[1] Surrounding the niche are pictures of foodstuffs, including a pig's head, sausages, and a ham; below, a serpent approaches an altar (Clarke 2003: 78). On the wall directly to the right (the east wall) when facing the niche, there is a painted scene framed by two rather large *lares* of a group of adults and children who seem to comprise an entire household attending a sacrifice. At the far left next to one *lar*, a male youth plays the *tibia* (double oboe) near a small cylindrical altar. The

[1] Buildings in Pompeii are normally located by their regio number (I, II, III, etc.) followed by insula number (1, 2, 3, etc.); a third number refers to the location of the doorway to the building in the insula. The house attributed to Sutoria Primigenia, for example, can be found in regio I, insula 13, entered at doorway 2. See Clarke 2003: 70 for a convenient map of Pompeii with regiones and insulae marked.

paterfamilias reaches towards the altar which has offerings set upon it, his head covered by his toga as was customary for sacrifice. Slightly behind him stands a woman, presumably his wife as she wears a *stola*, the quintessential garment of Roman matrons (contrast Clarke 2003: 76–8, who identifies them as the *genius* and *juno* of the householders). A total of thirteen adults and children are assembled next to the couple whom scholars propose represent their slaves (Fröhlich 1991: 261; George 1997: 317 n. 41; Clarke 2003: 78). Yet at least one of the boys, who holds an offering dish, may be the son of the freeborn couple since children frequently served as *camilli* (assistants at sacrifice), and both ancient literary sources and modern scholarship lend the impression that these children were generally freeborn (Festus, *De verborum significatione* 43M; Macrobius, *Sat*. 3.8.7; Wiedemann 1989: 183–4; Rawson 2003: 213, 274). Such an interpretation puts this boy's participation and perhaps that of others depicted (cf. Tybout 1996: 362) in a rather different light: instead of seeing them as young slaves watching their master honour the household gods and affirming his dominion through their attendance, we can see them learning by observation how they will one day conduct a sacrifice on behalf of a *domus* of their own.

This scene comes from a modest dwelling that had a single *lararium*. More affluent houses, however, sometimes featured two or even three *lararia* commonly located in the kitchen and *atrium* which was a central and very much multi-purpose room that was also the site of other important rituals including those related to death and mourning (George 1997: 303–6). There is no clear consensus on the significance of multiple shrines. Were shrines in kitchens and other service areas, which are often humbler in appearance, primarily used by slaves? Were those located in representational rooms such as *atria* and peristyles, which tend to be more elaborate, reserved mainly for worship by the freeborn family and the *paterfamilias*' sacrifices for the household in particular, as some have proposed (George 1997: 317; Edmondson 2011: 345)? Do multiple shrines point to multiple families—freeborn and slave—and thus to communities of worshippers within the same domestic space (Bodel 2008: 265)? Or do very practical concerns, which have little to do with differentiating freeborn from slave, underlie their locations? In his study of three Pompeian houses, each of which has two or more *lararia* dispersed among kitchens, *atria*, peristyles, and rooms opening onto gardens, Lipka (2006: 329) draws attention to practical needs, especially well-ventilated spaces for burning offerings and proximity to amenities for preparing sacrificial meals after blood sacrifice. He also raises other worthwhile considerations about visibility and access which the *Casa del Cenacolo* (Pompeii V.2, h) illustrates well with three shrines, one each in the kitchen, the vestibule near the *atrium*, and a small corridor opening onto the garden. Lipka (2006: 330–1) believes the kitchen and garden shrines were in use while the one in the vestibule did not serve a cult function but rather was a 'display of piety' to any visitor to the house. He proposes the garden *lararium* was the central shrine, accessible only to those invited to this more private part of the house. It was also the most elaborate, found with a full set of devotional objects *in situ* including statuettes of Mercury and Minerva, and an altar bearing the remains of sacrificial ashes.

Coming-of-Age Rites for Freeborn Children

The *lararium* was also a focus of lifecycle rituals for freeborn members of the household, particularly transitions from childhood to adulthood. An ancient commentator on one of Horace's *Satires* (Pseudo Acro, *ad* Hor. *Sat*. 1.6.65–6) reports that prior to marriage, girls dedicated their dolls to the *lares*. The poet Persius (2.70) identifies Venus as the recipient instead; for some, this goddess may have been among the *penates* (household gods) which could be included either in tangible or painted form in *lararia* with or without representations of the *lares* as well. On her wedding day, a new bride was said to have set a coin on the hearth for the *lares* of her husband's family (Nonius Marcellus, *De compendiosa doctrina* 852L).

The coming-of-age ceremony for freeborn boys known as *sumere togam virilem*, 'the taking of the toga of manhood', was likewise performed before the *lares* and is well documented. Although authors concentrate on celebrations among the upper classes, the ceremony was open and seemingly attractive to freeborn boys of all socio-economic backgrounds because it bore several practical consequences not dependent on rank or wealth since receipt of the adult toga, which only citizen men were permitted to wear, was a necessary precursor to full participation in politics and the army, and to certain social privileges.

When Romans enumerated the different stages in individuals' lives that were also meaningful to families and the wider community, taking the *toga virilis* was routinely listed. The senator Pliny the Younger (*Ep*. 1.9.3) remarked that attending *toga virilis* rites along with betrothals and weddings comprised the sort of *officia* (social duties) expected of a man of his age and stature. According to Tertullian (*Idol*. 16.1–3), early in the third century CE prominent Christians attended boys' coming-of-age ceremonies and other significant lifecycle rituals including naming ceremonies (held eight and nine days after birth for girls and boys respectively), betrothals, and weddings because these events similarly constituted *officia* for them. He counselled fellow Christians that attendance was not problematic even though these rites involved sacrifices to pagan gods, provided the purpose was to fulfil a social duty rather than pay homage to idols.

There was no fixed age at which freeborn boys celebrated coming of age. Age 15 or 16 appear to have been conventional ages in the late Republic and first two centuries of the Principate. Cicero, his son Marcus, and nephew Quintus all took the toga at 16, while Augustus and his grandsons Gaius and Lucius were each 15. Some received their togas below these customary ages, such as the future emperors Tiberius at 14, Nero and Caracalla at 13, while others were older, including Tiberius Caesar, son of the younger Drusus, and Caligula who were both 18 (Marquardt 1990 [1886]: 128–30). Although donning the toga often coincided with puberty, there is no evidence that it was a formal requirement for the ceremony despite Rousselle's insistence (1988: 59), and it seems fathers may have commonly chosen the date. The Augustan poet Ovid (*Fast*. 3.771–2) indicates

that 17 March was popular, which was the Liberalia festival in honour of the god Liber. This festival may have been preferred because of Liber's associations with sexual as well as social freedoms which the ritual achievement of manhood sanctioned, ushering in a period of excess for some (Dolansky 2008: 55–7). Yet this was not the only date chosen (*pace* Dumézil 1996 [1966]: 378, 616; Harmon 1978: 1597–8), as various days throughout the year are recorded, such as 18 October for Augustus and 24 April for Tiberius.

A boy's ritual passage to adulthood began at the *lararium* where he dedicated his *bulla* to the *lares* and set aside his *toga praetexta*. These items distinguished freeborn boys from those of freed or servile status, and were regarded as *insignia puerorum ingenuorum*, 'the emblems of freeborn boys' (Horace, *Ep*. 5.12; Valerius Maximus, *Factorum ac dictorum memorabilium libri* IX 5.6.8; Macrobius, *Sat*. 1.6.11). The *toga praetexta*, a white toga with a purple border around the bottom edge, was worn mainly in formal or ceremonial contexts; the *bulla*, worn daily, was an apotropaic locket typically fashioned from gold. The boy likely then made an additional sacrifice of incense, spelt, honeycomb, or cakes, which were standard offerings by individuals to the *lares*. Before putting on the manly toga, he received a special tunic from his father called a *tunica recta* or *regilla* ('straight' or 'royal' tunic). Woven on an old-fashioned, upright loom, the tunic was believed to bring good luck and was the same garment brides-to-be slept in the night before their wedding ceremonies (Festus, *De verborum significatione* 277L, 289L). Some scholars suggest boys also slept in the tunic prior to their rites (Fraschetti 1997: 65) while others believe they put it on immediately before receiving the *toga virilis* (Néraudau 1979: 148).

When a father was present, he bestowed the *toga virilis* on his son, the pure white toga worn only by freeborn adult men. The boy's first appearance in it must have been memorable and an emotional experience for him and all observing his transformation from boy to man. The exchange of togas took place under the auspices of the household gods and perhaps deities such as Juventas (goddess of youth) and Liber as well (Tertullian, *Nat*. 2.11.11; Augustine, *Civ*. 4.11; Ovid, *Fast*. 3.771–88). Some Latin authors specifically use the verb *auspicor* in connection with the ritual which evokes ideas of ceremonial beginnings in addition to its fundamental sense of taking the auspices to determine the will of the gods (Valerius Maximus, *Factorum ac dictorum memorabilium libri* IX 5.4.4; Apuleius, *Apol*. 73.9). A boy of the senatorial order might have performed these rites in the *atrium*, the central reception room of the house where masks of his male ancestors (*imagines*) were displayed, reminding family members and visitors that the ancestors were 'an integral part of life in the house' (Flower 1996: 186). As he took the manly toga, he joined an illustrious group of male relatives who had achieved this milestone before him. In his new toga, he became the focus of pride and admiration for those attending his ceremony: most likely his immediate family as well as more extended relations, friends of the boy and his parents, plus servile members of the household there to wait on guests but perhaps also invited to witness the rites if they had had a particularly close relationship with the boy, for instance, as a nurse or pedagogue (Dolansky 2008: 50–1).

As Pliny's and Tertullian's comments indicate, coming of age was not a celebration for the household alone, and once the ceremonies inside the house were complete, the concluding rituals occurred in civic spaces where the wider community could share in

the boy's ritual achievement. In Rome, the boy-turned-man, who was sometimes called a *novus togatus* (new toga-wearer), progressed from his home to the forum and the Capitol accompanied by family and friends. Several records offices were located in the area of the forum (Purcell 1993: 139–41) so the procession may have involved a stop at one of these for the boy to register his name as a citizen, signalling his eligibility to vote and serve in the army. Servius (*ad Eclogas commentarii* 4.49), a fourth-century CE commentator on Vergil, suggests the next stage might have commonly been called 'going to the Capitol' (*ad Capitolium ire*), for he explains that Jupiter, whose temple was located there, looked after boys as they grew up and took the *toga virilis*. On the Capitol, the boy performed sacrifices (Appian, *Bell. Civ*. 4.5.30) though the recipients are not specified. Since the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus dominated the Capitol, sacrifices there seem likely both to Jupiter and Juventas whose small shrine was inside. Then the group may have progressed to the forum again where Ovid (*Fast*. 3.787–8) reports people would gather around a *novus togatus* since the upper classes customarily distributed gifts of food or money to mark the occasion (Pliny, *Ep*. 10.116; Apuleius, *Apol*. 87.10–11; *CIL* 10.688–4–5).

The *toga virilis* ceremony was rich in symbolism particularly because of the meanings invested in the garments that played central roles. Romans associated the purple border of the *toga praetexta*, which was worn by freeborn boys and girls alike, with sanctity and inviolability. Persius (5.30) considered it a guardian of the innocent and vulnerable. The elder Pliny (*Nat*. 9.60.127) noted the connection between *purpura* (purple) and the majesty or dignity (*maiestas*) of children. *Purpura*, which was closer to garnet than actual purple, symbolically linked the child's *praetexta* to the institution of blood sacrifice as shades of *purpura* were present in the blood of animal victims and the garments of civic religious officials since curule magistrates and priests also wore bordered togas while performing sacrifices, and the Vestal Virgins wore a special veil described as *praetextum* (Festus, *De verborum significatione* 348L). The *toga virilis* was not an ordinary garment either and was similarly imbued with powerful ideological associations. It was often called *toga pura* to denote its natural colour, probably off-white or grayish white, but this designation may have been especially employed for its ethical connotations since only those of free birth were permitted to wear it. Cicero, who was very conscious of status, uses the term almost exclusively when referring to rites for his son and nephew, and may have also preferred it for its moral connotations since the boys were ritually and sexually unspoiled as they prepared to enter adulthood. The epithet *libera* (free) was also applied to the adult toga. The term had considerable resonance in a slave-owning society, bringing to mind the boy's acquisition of full citizenship as well as the greater freedoms socially and sexually he could now enjoy, including the right to recline at banquets (Dolansky 2008: 55–6).

In addition to the deep symbolism inherent in specific elements, the *toga virilis* ceremony can be understood as a rite of passage and analysed within this framework to lend further meaning. Van Gennep, who originated the concept, did not include the ceremony among the Roman rites he classified as *rites de passage*, although he did discuss social and physiological puberty at Rome (1960: 66). His concept of a *rite de passage*,

with its tripartite structure of separation, transition, and incorporation, is useful for uncovering further significance in individual elements of the ceremony and for appreciating more fully its function and relevance overall. Van Gennep's model begins with separation which can be seen in several facets of the ceremony. As the boy laid aside his *toga praetexta* and apotropaic *bulla*, he symbolically closed a chapter of his life, consciously abandoning his identity as a child with these distinguishing markers of childhood. He then experienced a physical separation as he left his house to progress through the city as a *novus togatus*. The procession very literally entailed transition and liminality, the second stage of Van Gennep's ritual process. As the boy departed, he physically crossed the *limen* (threshold) of his house and awaited his journey to the forum and Capitol. Until he reached these important civic sites, he had only completed part of his progression to manhood and remained in a liminal state. In a more symbolic sense, the *novus togatus* had cast off his former identity but not yet fully adopted (or perhaps fashioned) a new one. He could never be a freeborn boy again, but he was not wholly a man either, for full incorporation into the ranks of citizen men depended on more than simply putting on the toga. Incorporation or re-aggregation forms the final phase. Completion of the rite brought the boy back to where he started: his family and his home. The *novus togatus* re-joined his family but as a man instead of a boy: though his status was altered, he was admitted into the family and the home, physically and symbolically.

The ritual exchange of the *bulla* and *toga praetexta* for the *toga virilis* was a mainstay of Roman culture, celebrated not only in the city of Rome or during the period under consideration, but well beyond both geographically and chronologically. Pliny, writing in the late first century CE, and Apuleius and Tertullian in the late second, document rites in Pontus and Bithynia and the provinces of North Africa as routine occurrences. Plutarch's lecture *On listening*, addressed to a *novus togatus* named Nicander who received his toga in central Greece, indicates the presence of the ceremony in the east and outside a major urban centre. Indeed, the ceremony is widely attested from Alexandria to Asia (Plutarch, *Ant*. 71.3; Cicero, *Att*. 5.20.9, 6.1.12), Sicily to Surrentum (*CIL* 10.7346; *CIL* 10.688), and into the fourth and fifth centuries CE (Servius, *ad Eclogas commentarii* 4.49; Augustine, *Civ*. 4.11) where it appears to have remained a vital part of Roman domestic life.

A Festival to Commemorate the Family Dead

The *toga virilis* ceremony was only one of a number of domestic rites that demonstrate the continued prominence of *sacra familiae* in the lives of upper-class families from the Republic well into Late Antiquity. A number of annual family festivals had considerable longevity and became established parts of Roman culture beyond Italy in provincial locales. These festivals mainly concerned interactions between different human

constituents: relations among living members of the household, particularly freeborn and slave; and relations between the living and the dead. Both sets of interpersonal relations could be marked by tensions, anxieties, and even conflict for which divine aid was sought (cf. Rao 2006: 158–9).

For living members of the household, the present and future welfare of the *domus* were primary concerns, especially for the *paterfamilias* and his immediate family, which is evident from the concentration of festivals that aimed at addressing household dynamics. The best known is the Saturnalia celebrated in mid-December. Characterized by increased freedom and licence for the entire household, this festival generally entailed a role reversal between masters and slaves (albeit temporary and often only partial) whose functional significance was to mitigate the tensions between freeborn and slave that slavery as an institution produced as a matter of course (Dolansky 2011a). The Matronalia, observed on 1 March, appears to have had similar goals, though it focused specifically on interactions between matrons and their slaves and acquiring more ready obedience through a ritual feast in the slaves' honour. The festival also had other important aims regarding the future of the *domus* which husbands' prayers and sacrifices 'for the preservation of their wives/marriages' (*pro conservatione coniugii*) and matrons' vows to Juno Lucina, a goddess of childbirth, sought to achieve (Dolansky 2011b). Two additional festivals—the Matralia on 11 June and Nonae Caprotinae on 5 July—highlighted particularly challenging dynamics between matrons and female slaves that developed over male masters' sanctioned and apparently regular sexual use of slaves. The distinct rituals that comprised these two festivals endeavoured to diminish, at least temporarily, the impact of these conflicts which threatened the harmony of the whole household (Dolansky 2016).

The second main group of domestic festivals concerned relations between living and deceased kin. Death was ubiquitous in Roman society and the ritual responses to it numerous. Life expectancy was low due to a host of factors, and rates of infant and child mortality in particular were staggering compared to modern developed nations. Funerary rites could range from simple to elaborate depending on the wishes of the deceased and survivors (Toynbee 1971: 43–61), and this was likewise the case for subsequent acts to honour the deceased. Remembering the dead, often through prayer and sacrifice, was of great importance within the family specifically. Wills and epitaphs sometimes preserve detailed instructions to ensure offerings were brought regularly to tombs and annual commemorative festivals duly observed (e.g. *CIL* 13.5708 with Hopkins 1983: 247–8; *CIL* 6.10248; Toynbee 1971: 61–3). Aside from the Parentalia, the major festival for deceased kin held in February, two unofficial festivals honouring the dead seem to have been popular: the Violaria in late April and Rosalia in May and June which coincided with the seasons for violets and roses respectively (Toynbee 1971: 63; Purcell 1996: 146). Though Romans predominantly focused on commemorating the dead, as the Parentalia illustrates, families also observed the Lemuria in May which was instead concerned with appeasing unhappy spirits of deceased kin through a nocturnal ritual performed by the *paterfamilias* that attempted to placate them with offerings then exorcise them from the house (Ovid, *Fast*. 5.419–92).

Unlike most Roman festivals which lasted a day or two, the Parentalia spanned nine days from 13–21 February. Ovid (*Fast*. 2.548, 2.34) refers to *dies parentales*, 'days for commemorating the dead', and *dies ferales*, 'days of the dead', reflecting the festival's duration. Two late and roughly contemporaneous sources, Philocalus' codex-calendar of 354 CE and Prudentius' denouncement of pagan rites (*Contra Symmachum* 2.1107–8), record a Vestal Virgin performing a sacrifice for the dead on the festival's first day. This seems to have served to initiate formally the period devoted to the worship of the dead to be observed by families rather than the civic body as a collective. The final day was specially designated the Feralia, which Ovid (*Fast*. 2.569–70) derived from *ferre*, 'to bring', in reference to the custom of bringing offerings to the tombs, discussed below. Varro (*Ling*. 6.13), an eminent Republican scholar of religion, associated Feralia with *inferi*, 'the dead below', while Festus (*De verborum significatione* 75L), in his work on Latin etymology, proposed both *ferre* and *ferire*, 'to strike', suggesting a link with the striking (sacrificing) of animal victims.

Originally the Parentalia may have chiefly concerned *parentes*, a term that could refer to parents but also more distant relatives such as grandparents or great-grandparents who could legitimately be considered ancestors. Festus (*De verborum significatione* 247L) provides a useful definition: 'Commonly either a father or a mother is called *parens*, but those versed in the law say that grandfathers and great-grandfathers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers are called by the name of *parentes*' (author's translation). Perhaps it is from his definition that some scholars regard the festival as focused exclusively on ancestors or parents, yet both interpretations overlook important literary and epigraphic evidence that attests to honouring a spectrum of kin reflecting both vertical and horizontal family ties (Dolansky 2011c: 129–31). Ausonius' *Parentalia*, a late fourth-century CE collection of poems named after the festival, repopulates one elite Roman's kinship universe and offers considerable insight into the impact of suffering many losses in a lifetime. Ausonius commemorates his parents and grandparents, but also his wife and infant son, followed by a host of relatives varying in degree of intimacy and fondness including siblings, aunts and uncles, in-laws and their children, a cousin and a grandson. The theme of untimely or premature death is prominent, as four of his thirty tributes are for young children and more than twice as many for men and women in the prime of their youth, reminding us of the demographic realities that shaped Roman life and must have deeply influenced ideas concerning rituals for the dead.

It is not clear whether families were expected to visit the tombs every day to offer real rather than poetic tributes to the dead or only on the festival's final day when it was customary to travel to tombs often located on the outskirts of cities. Ovid (*Fast*. 2.533–42) encourages people to bring small offerings to the dead: floral garlands or loose violets, bread softened in wine, or a bit of grain mixed with salt. 'The dead desire little', he assures; 'they want piety, not rich gifts' (*parva petunt manes: pietas pro divite grata est* / *munere*). He also urges celebrants to 'build hearths and add prayers and ritual words' (*adde preces positis et sua verba focis*). These offerings are simple yet their symbolic value may have been greater. For instance, grain sprinkled with salt was offered to the *penates* while garlands, grain, and spelt were common gifts to the

lares. Typical sacrifices at household shrines are thus paralleled during the Parentalia at family tombs, thereby creating a link ritually and spatially between distinct elements of the family's religious programme. Wine and purple flowers may have been intended to resemble the blood of animal sacrifice which was rare but not unattested on the Parentalia (*CIL* 10.113 and 114; cf. Lucrertius, *De rerum natura* 3.51–3 and cf. Festus, *De verborum significatione* 75L). Inscriptions also mention offering incense and pouring libations (*CIL* 5.2072, 5.4489, 5.4410), and some tombs were even fitted with pipes so that food and drink could be poured directly on the burial (Toynbee 1971: 51; Stirling 2004: 433). At Carthage, Leptiminus, and Hadrumentum in North Africa, tombs frequently had low square tables attached to or placed in front of tomb markers; some had small depressions in the centre apparently for holding offerings whose burned surfaces attest to the performance of sacrifice there (Stirling 2004: 433).

In many ways, Roman tombs concerned the living as much as the dead (see Gudme, Chapter 20 in this volume). These were not only places to house the dead, but spaces for the living to celebrate and commemorate them as well. By virtue of their utilitarian and decorative features, some tombs seem to have been designed specifically to accommodate the ritual and social needs inherent in the nine-day Parentalia and other commemorative occasions. Larger tombs, such as those at Isola Sacra near Ostia, could be equipped with wells and cisterns, kitchens, ovens, dining rooms, and benches (Dolansky 2011c: 135–6). One particularly well-outfitted tomb from Rome, a *kepotaphion* (tomb-garden) known from an inscription of 6 CE, had a *triclinium* (dining room) with trellis and pavement, stone, wood, and marble tables, a fountain, and a water tank with bronze taps (*AE* 1986: 13, 25.6–18 with Purcell 1996: 146). Gatherings on the Parentalia may not have been entirely sombre affairs despite the solemn nature of the rites themselves. Hopkins (1983: 233) maintained that 'we have to imagine Roman families picnicking *al fresco* at the family tomb, where, according to Christian critics, they often got boisterously drunk, with their dead relatives around them'. Tertullian (*An*. 4), for example, claimed Romans brought offerings of food to their dead but came home drunk on the wine intended for libations, and accused them of worshipping their dead 'with excessive show of devotion' (*impensissimo officio, Res*. 1).

The veneration of ancestors and more recently deceased kin was a demonstration of piety and proper religious practice (*religio*), but also of the importance of familial bonds, vertical and horizontal, that had to be honoured in life and death. No period in recorded history seems to have existed in which the Parentalia was not celebrated nor were there many places in the Empire where the festival did not become part of the culture. Inscriptions from the first three centuries CE record the Parentalia in Italy and Gaul, while Tertullian's critiques indicate it was embedded in religious life in North Africa in the third century where it continued for centuries as Augustine's (*Conf*. 6.2) familiarity with the rites indicates. The festival may not have been exclusively a western phenomenon either as a fragmentary inscription from Philippi in Greece suggests (Dolansky 2011c: 150).

Conclusion

Sacrifices to tutelary deities, rituals marking transitions in the life-course, and annual festivals all constituted *sacra familiae*, the religious rites celebrated by urban, upper-class households. These *sacra* were part of the larger Roman social institution of *religio*—a set of beliefs and practices that concerned relations with the gods and between humans. Though the origin of the term is uncertain, *religio* seems to be connected to both *ligare*, 'to bind', and *legere*, 'to collect'. Both associations are suggestive of a social function of religion as a mechanism that connects individuals and unites them through shared ritual experience. This chapter has focused on representative examples from three main areas of domestic practice in order to provide some background for early Christian rituals: worship of the *lares* and other gods at household shrines; the *toga virilis* ceremony celebrating a freeborn boy's coming of age; and the nine-day Parentalia festival commemorating deceased kin. These rites demonstrate the importance of ritual acts, particularly prayer and sacrifice, as a means of communicating with the gods to obtain their favour and in activating the principle of reciprocity that was fundamental to Roman religious belief. Participation in *sacra familiae* was broad and inclusive, and both actors and audiences were essential as the *lararium* painting from the house of Sutoria Primigenia illustrates well with its depiction of an entire household honouring the household gods. Overall the rituals examined here reveal the immense importance of *sacra familiae* and their significant contribution to Roman domestic and social life.

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CHAPTER 11

MAGIC

ISTVÁN CZACHESZ

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline an analytical concept of magic and consider how it contributes to our understanding of early Christian rituals. Including a chapter on magic in this Handbook is not self-evident. For several decades, the use of the category of 'magic' has been controversial both in biblical studies and in the study of religion in general. The academic use of the word goes back to Edward B. Tylor and James G. Frazer, who famously identified magic with a primitive stage of human thought, which was superseded by religion at a more developed stage. The dichotomy of religion and magic influenced most subsequent scholarship on the topic. Towards the end of the twentieth century, the distinction between magic and religion came under attack and a new consensus emerged, according to which, magic is an ethnocentric and pejorative term that demarcates out-groups deemed inferior (Kuklick 1991; Smith 1995; Kapferer 1997). Frazer's notions, however, exerted a continuing influence on the use of the term in Biblical Studies. According to Frazer (Frazer 1920: 220–43), one of the fundamental differences between magic and religion lies in how they treat superhuman agents. Magic, on the one hand, 'constrains or coerces' spirits; religion, on the other, 'conciliates and propitiates' them (1920: 225). According to the majority of biblical scholars, ancient Jewish and Christian miracle stories show that God granted miracles to God's people out of God's mercy, whereas their pagan competitors resorted to coercive magical manipulations. Making such a distinction, however, is not warranted by the ancient sources. Although the Greek Magical Papyri write about 'coercing' (*epanagkazō*) a superhuman agent, a closer look at some of the passages reveals that the magician's words could be as well understood as petitionary prayers (*PGM* IV.2520–67). Indeed, the approach of these texts is not far from the one suggested by Jesus: 'whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours' (Mark 11:24). As we will see, Graeco-Roman magical practice involved a complex relationship between the magician and the magician's superhuman helper, which can also be used to make sense of early Christian texts.

In the meantime, a few scholars turned to the concept of magic to understand ancient Judaism and the Jesus movement. Most significantly, since Morton Smith's (1978) polemical characterization of Jesus as a magician, scholarship of the New Testament has taken a variety of positions with respect to the magical elements of Jesus' portrait in the gospels (e.g. Aune 1980; Craffert 2008; Kollmann 2011; 2013). Most recently, Richard A. Horsley (2015) systematically revisited ancient and modern conceptualizations of magic and magicians and their use in the study of the Jesus tradition. Horsley's suggestion (2015: 99) that the concept of ancient magic is a Western construct that should be abandoned reflects the developments in the broader field of the study of religion during the second half of the twentieth century, as we have discussed above. In this chapter, we are not attempting to decide whether Jesus and his followers were magicians. Adopting a cognitive and evolutionary perspective, we will argue for the use of magic as an etic analytical concept.

Towards a Definition of Magic

Let us consider some familiar examples as a starting point. When baptism is performed in a contemporary Christian congregation, every participant agrees that some significant change occurs to the baptized person (and possibly other participants). Most participants, however, would not attribute a comparable effect to singing a hymn or a responsory. Something we will call ritual efficacy is at play in the case of baptism. Still the very important effect of baptism is not visible, at least according to the majority of the participants. In contrast, a healing ritual performed in a charismatic congregation must have clearly visible consequences if it is to be deemed successful. But it is not only visibility that matters. For example, an ordination ceremony makes the ordained person a minister of the Church instantly and the same can be said about becoming a head of state in a swearing-in ceremony. Is there any difference between these two ceremonies? These examples expose some of the questions that have to be considered when formulating an academic theory of magic.

With these preliminary considerations in mind, let us give a heuristic definition of magic as follows: (1) magic is connected to the use of rituals to produce some effect (ritual efficacy), instead of simply expressing social or psychological realities (cf. Sørensen 2006; Uro 2011). However, not all magic appears as ritual necessarily, and arguably not all rituals with efficacious aspects count as magic. (2) Magic involves putative mechanisms and results. In other words, magic involves theories of why and how it works (cf. Sørensen 2007). These expectations are further supported by cognitive structures that make them persistent in the face of negative evidence (see below). In this respect, magic is different from superstitions or ritualized behaviour that involve no such (naïve) theorizing. (3) The putative mechanisms and results of magic are (often) falsifiable by modern scientific methods. This aspect of magic distinguishes it from many

efficacious rituals that produce effects, for example, in heavenly realities, and are therefore not potentially falsifiable.

The third element of the definition is not straightforward and it might be useful to add some comments to it already at this point. First, invoking modern scientific judgement as a touchstone is a decidedly etic approach. Rather than using the notion of magic to label the out-group, however, our approach aims at identifying the magical aspects of human thought and behaviour in both Western and non-Western contexts. Second, magical explanations can be given to practices that work for reasons that are not transparent to the magical practitioner. Conversely, strictly biomedical healing procedures or some ritual practices (both elite and non-elite) of industrial societies might have magical aspects and interpretations.

From our definition of magic it follows that the same practice can invite multiple interpretations, both magical and non-magical. For example, baptism has had a number of different interpretations in the history of Christianity. It has been understood, among others, as moral cleansing, spiritual rebirth, or the integration of a person into God's people. Baptism is thus an efficacious ritual beyond doubt. Since its result cannot be confirmed or rejected by an empirical test, however, it does not count as magic, in our definition. Yet we cannot exclude a strictly magical understanding of baptism, such as a protective measure against evil spiritual influence, illness, or misfortune. In the Book of Acts, the strong connection made between the 'baptism of the Spirit', on the one hand, and the ability to prophesy, speak in tongues, and work miracles, on the other (e.g. Acts 8:14–24; 19:1–8), indicates a magical interpretation of the ritual.

Magic and Associative Learning

Associative learning underlies magic at a fundamental level. In associative learning, an organism establishes a connection between two hitherto unrelated items. In the famous textbook example, Pavlov's dog learned to associate the sound of a bell with food. In operant conditioning, a particular form of associative learning, the animal learns to associate a stimulus with the its own behaviour. Sometimes, however, the animal's behaviour and the stimulus are unrelated. The behavioural pattern of superstitious conditioning was first described by B. F. Skinner (Skinner 1948; Morse and Skinner 1957). Skinner placed a hungry pigeon in a cage equipped with an automatic feeder. A clock was set to give the bird access to the food for five seconds at regular intervals. Instead of just waiting passively for the next appearance of the food, most of the birds started to perform various kinds of repetitive behaviours. Skinner called this behaviour 'superstitious conditioning'. He suggested that 'superstitious conditioning' developed because the birds happened to execute some movement just as the food appeared, and as a result they repeated it. If the subsequent presentation of food occurred not long after that, the response was strengthened further. Skinner suggested that the behaviour he observed

with pigeons is analogous to the mechanism of some human superstitions, such as rituals performed to change one's luck with cards or movements of the arm after a bowler has released the ball.

Skinner's suggestions about human analogies inspired further experimentation. In the late 1980s, Gregory A. Wagner and Edward K. Morris (1987) designed a mechanical clown, Bobo, which dispensed a marble from its mouth at regular intervals. They promised pre-school children they would receive a toy (which they actually received anyway) if they collected enough marbles in an eight-minute session. The session was repeated once a day for six days. Children developed responses similar to those of Skinner's pigeons: they grimaced before Bobo, touched its face, wriggled, smiled at him, or kissed his nose. Koichi Ono (1987) experimented with twenty Japanese university students. The students were asked to take a seat in a booth that was equipped with a counter, a signal lamp (with three colours), and three levers. They were not required to do anything specific but were told they might earn scores on the counter if they did something. Scores appeared on the counter either at regular or random intervals, but without any correlation with the light signals and anything the students did. Three of the twenty students developed 'superstitious behaviour': one student pulled a lever several times and then held it, consistently repeating this pattern for 30 minutes; another student developed a different pattern of pulling the levers; the third student performed a complex sequence of movements that gradually changed during the session.

It is interesting to examine which reinforcement schedules result in the strongest conditioning (Ferster and Skinner 1957; Schwartz et al. 2002: 217–24). One might expect that this is continuous or monotonous, invariable reinforcement. In fact, the opposite is true: continuous reinforcement leads to the lowest rate of responding, whereas the variable ratio schedule leads to the fastest rates of responding. Variable ratio means that every nth (e.g. fifth or tenth) response is rewarded on the average, but the gap between two rewards can be very short or very long. In real life, the latter type of reward schedule is found in fishing and gambling, for example, which might be an important factor in people becoming so easily addicted to these activities (Eysenck 2004: 267).

Rainmaking is a universally known form of magic that is performed even in developed countries (Bownas 1963; Dunnigan 2005; Boudon 2006). Rainfall obviously follows a variable schedule; therefore, we may think about rain dances as responses to a variable reinforcer. A rainmaking ritual that is accidentally followed by rain may motivate the repeated use of the ritual, launching a chain of ritual responses to the variable reinforcement schedule of rainfall. The plausibility of 'making rain' with a ritual is somewhere between the 'efficiency' of magical cures for headache and the inducement of earthquakes that ruin prisons, examples frequently occurring in ancient magic. Controlling rain is a recurrent theme in biblical traditions, as well. According to 1 Kings 17, Elijah was able to stop and start rain at will, which is cited as an example of faith in James 5:18. Choni the Circle-Drawer was a famous rainmaker in the first century BCE (Mishnah Taanit 3:8) and praying for rain was established in post-Talmudic Judaism (Lasker and Lasker 1984). From Tertullian (*c.*160–*c.*220) we learn that Christians were able to obtain rain through prayer (*Apol.* 5). In Graeco-Roman antiquity, the official and private practice

of rainmaking is attested since archaic times and continues after the Christianization of the Empire (Graf 2005: 298).

In addition to following a variable reinforcement schedule, the amount of rain in each rainfall also displays a particular regularity called the power-law distribution (Peters and Christensen 2002; 2006). In simple terms, this means that the time we have to wait for rainfalls of increasingly heavier duration increases rapidly; yet even very heavy rainfalls can occur once in a while. Another natural event that follows the same regularity is an earthquake, as captured by the Gutenberg-Richter law. Interestingly, earthquakes constitute a well-known topic in early Christian magic and miracle. In the Book of Acts, first the apostles (Acts 5:17–20), then Peter alone (Acts 12:6–12), and finally Paul and Silas (Acts 16:25–43) are miraculously delivered from prison. In the last example, Paul and Silas' prayer is answered by an earthquake that opens the prison doors. From the *Greek Magical Papyri* it appears that rescuing people from jail was also something magicians were known to do when relying on the power of the proper helper (*paredros*, on which see more below). That is, they could 'open closed doors and free people in chains' (*PGM* I.90–130). Christian magical texts contain similar references:

> Let the rock [split], let the darkness split before me, [let] the earth split, let the iron dissolve ....
>
> (London Oriental Manuscript 6796[2], 9–25; Meyer 2002)

> They will force him out onto the street, by the will of God.
>
> (Heidelberg Coptic text 686, 14.251; Meyer and Smith 1999)

Let us note that that demolishing buildings (mainly pagan sanctuaries) is also frequently achieved by the apostles in the apocryphal Acts (e.g. Acts of Paul 5 in Papyrus Heidelberg 37–9; Acts of John 42–7; Acts of Titus 9; Coptic Acts of Philip [in Lemm 1890: 191]; Acts of John by Pseudo-Prochorus [in Zahn 1880: 42, 81]; Acts of Barnabas 19; [cf. Czachesz 2007: 206]). The textual evidence suggests that Christians practised magic related to two natural phenomena, namely, rainfall and earthquakes, the occurrence of which is governed by a common pattern. This pattern, in turn, provides a special type of variable-ratio reinforcement schedule. Making rain and causing earthquakes thus can be 'learned' because their schedule makes them excellent reinforcers of putative magical influence.

Magical Reasoning

In terms of our definition, there is no magic without explanations and theories of why and how it works. We will especially deal with two types of explanations and theories. Intuitions about the mechanisms and effects of magic belong to the first category. Such

intuitions seem to be largely consistent across cultures. The other type of thinking about magic involves explicit and often more culture-specific theorizing. In different cultural contexts, explicit theories of magic can assume radically different forms, while the intuitions that underlie first-hand reactions remain the same. For example, a fanatic UFO believer can explain changes in his or her mental or physical condition by alien abduction, but the same changes would be attributed to favourable response to a sacrifice, demonic attack, or the influence of evil eye (depending on the positive or negative nature of the experience) in an ancient Mediterranean context.

From the experiments discussed in the previous section, it has become clear that superstitious conditioning can appear even in a single session. But why would such behaviour become ingrained in one's behavioural repertoire? Why do people not realize that their actions have in fact no influence on the state of affairs? It has been argued that superstitious conditioning (or its psychological foundation) might be an adaptation to situations where some recurrent danger or other salient event seems to be connected to some other event by causality (Foster and Kokko 2009). In some cases, it might be beneficial systematically to overestimate causality, even if it does not exist, rather than underestimating it. Such 'hypersensitivity' in dealing with environmental stimuli also underlies the detection of agency, which presents a more obvious case of evolutionary adaptation. When dealing with stimuli in the environment, it is a crucial skill to identify self-propelling, intentional agents, that perceive what is going on around them, react to those events, have goals, and form plans.

In an experiment conducted by Emily Pronin, Daniel M. Wegner, and their collaborators, participants were instructed to perform a 'voodoo ritual' with a doll (Pronin et al. 2006). They were introduced to a confederate who behaved either offensively or neutrally, and who later played the role of the 'victim' of magic. Then participants were asked to generate 'vivid and concentrated thoughts' about the victim (who was in the neighbouring room) and prick the doll in particular ways. Finally, the victim came back and reported having a slight headache. It turned out that participants who had ill thoughts about their victims (because of the victims' offensive behaviour) were likely to think that they caused the victims' headache, whereas participants meeting neutral victims were less likely to think so. In sum, university students, especially ones who were motivated to have negative thoughts about their victims, were easily made to believe they could curse victims by performing magic.

What can we conclude from this experiment for our discussion of magic? Why did students believe they caused harm from a distance? One can argue that such a belief is related to hypersensitive agent-detection (see above). In this case it is more precise to speak of 'agentive reasoning', that is, the use of concepts of agents to make sense of various kinds of information (not only direct sensory inputs). Although we do not call them 'demons' any longer, we find it easy to accept that there are different agencies acting in us, such as illnesses, emotions, desires, will, Jungian agents populating our psyche, and so on. Without thinking about it, the students in Pronin's experiment seem to have believed that a similar agency (possibly connected to their strong emotions) might act invisibly and cause damage in other people.

Another important underlying mechanism of magic is reasoning about contagion. In a series of experiments conducted by Carol Nemeroff, Paul Rozin, and their collaborators (Rozin et al. 1986; Nemeroff and Rozin 2000), participants avoided contact with objects that had previously been in contact with disgusting insects or substances, even after the objects were carefully sterilized. An even more surprising finding of Nemeroff and Rozin's was that objects that were in contact with morally condemned people elicited the same response (Rozin et al. 1986; Nemeroff and Rozin 1994; Lenfesty 2011). The famous example is 'Hitler's sweater': people strongly reject the idea of wearing a sweater that the experimenter tells them once belonged to Hitler, even if the sweater has been thoroughly cleaned. Theories about the origins of 'contagion avoidance' assume that it has contributed an evolutionary benefit, although the precise explanation remains unclear (Boyer 2001: 203–28; McCorkle 2010). However, although the response is somewhat less pronounced, there exists a parallel tendency to prefer contact with objects that belonged to morally valued people (Lenfesty 2011), which seems to be one of the underlying reason for the collection of memorabilia and the veneration of relics (Uro 2013). In sum, there is a cross-culturally attested human intuition that positive and negative qualities (including abstract, moral features) can be transmitted by contact.

Jesper Sørensen (2007: 95–139) distinguished between two types of magic. In 'transformative magical action', essential qualities are transferred from elements belonging to one domain to elements belonging to another domain (e.g. the bread becomes the body of Christ). In 'manipulative magical action', magical practices change the state of affairs inside a domain by manipulating elements in another domain (e.g. sunset is delayed by placing a stone on a tree). Here the relation between elements is changed, whereas essential qualities remain the same. With the help of cognitive blending theory (Fauconnier and Turner 2002), Sørensen explained how people establish a link between two domains (spaces), relying on either part-whole structures or conventional and perceptual likeness. Whereas the transfer of essential qualities seems to rely on exactly the same cognitive mechanism as intuitions about moral contagion in the experiments of Nemeroff and Rozin, the magical manipulations that change relations might present a more complex case. In the example cited above (delaying sunset), there is no physical contact between the objects manipulated by the magician and the events that are influenced by the manipulation. There is a certain parallel between this example and the induction of pain from a distance by manipulating a voodoo doll (and other similar instances not mentioned in this chapter) in the Pronin experiment discussed above. As other religious phenomena, such as widespread beliefs in the 'evil eye', suggest, the idea of agency acting from a distance provides, besides contagion, a complementary or alternative intuitive explanatory framework of magic.

The cross-culturally attested intuitions about agency, contagion, and probably other, hitherto less explored, cognitive mechanisms provide a cognitive framework that helps people make sense of the 'success' of superstitious behaviour. In addition to such intuitive or 'naive' appraisals of magical acts, religious traditions develop more formalized theories of magical efficacy (that is, theories of why magic works). In the New Testament, an important point in case is the power of God as communicated by the Holy Spirit, the

name of Jesus, and other means. In the ancient theory of magic, the mediation of divine assistance was formalized in the concept of the *paredros*. The *paredros* (literally meaning 'one that sits nearby') was the figure of a supernatural assistant who collaborated with the magician (Graf 1996; 2002; Graf et al. 2005: 85–9, 289–90). To acquire a *paredros*, one had to undergo specific initiatory rituals. The *paredros* could assume one of four different forms (Scibilia 2002; Pachoumi 2011; 2013): it might be (temporarily) materialized in human shape; assimilated to a deity, for example, 'Eros as assistant'; identified with an object, such as an iron lamella inscribed with Homeric verses; or represented by a demon. After his initiation, the magician could mediate between the divine and human realms, but only in so far as the *paredros* helped him, for example, by calling its name (Scibilia 2002: 72–5). The magician often calls the supernatural assistant 'lord' or 'ruler' and himself 'servant'. The *paredros* might be used for the following purposes (*PGM* I.96–130): to bring on dreams, to couple women and men, to kill enemies, to open closed doors and free people in chains, to stop attacks of demons and wild animals, to break the teeth of snakes, to put dogs to sleep.

Examples of helpers of magic are abundant in early Christian sources. As we noted above, healings and exorcisms are performed invoking Jesus' name and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit. However, attempts to use Jesus' name without proper initiation (in particular, the baptism of the Spirit) is doomed to failure (Acts 19:13–16). Various types of objects are identified as magical helpers, including the hem of Jesus' cloak (Mark 5:25–43 and parallels), Peter's shadow (Acts 5:15–16), Paul's aprons and handkerchiefs (Acts 19:12), the tomb of the apostles (Acts of Titus 11), gospel manuscripts (Acts of Barnabas 15; cf. Acts of Andrew 23), inscribed lamellae (Kotansky 2002), and the relics of the saints.

Yet another important cognitive mechanism that supports magic is the biased interpretation of evidence. 'Confirmation bias' means a tendency to seek evidence that is consistent with one's hypothesis and avoid seeking falsificatory evidence (Eysenck and Keane 2005: 470–80). In Peter Wason's classical experiment (Wason 1960; 1968), subjects had to discover a simple relational rule between three numbers (2–4–6) by generating other sets of three numbers that the experimenter checked against the rule. It was discovered that subjects insisted on an initial hypothesis and chose only sets of numbers that matched it. Subsequent experimental work has confirmed Wason's findings. More recently, Martin Jones and Robert Sugden (2001) have shown that information interpreted as confirming a hypothesis increases subjects' confidence in the truth of the hypothesis, even if that information is actually irrelevant. Finally, experiments have shown how confirmation bias works in a social context: supporters have seen more fouls with players of the opponent team than with their own players (Eysenck 2004: 328). In summary, information that may be seen as confirming one's hypothesis (or prejudice) is sought for and interpreted as such, whereas information falsifying it is avoided and ignored. It is easy to see that this universal cognitive attitude plays an important role in collecting 'evidence' for the effectiveness of magic.

Not only are people biased towards confirming evidence, but they are also extremely good at downplaying counterevidence. Magical practices are not vulnerable to

unsuccessful performances, because there is a wealth of explanatory strategies to deal with such situations (Evans-Pritchard 1937: 35; Boyer 1994: 208). In other words, the efficiency of magic is protected by the irrefutable circular reasoning that magic succeeds only when all necessary conditions are fulfilled, and we know that all conditions have been fulfilled only if the magic succeeds.

Magic and Miracle

In addition to conditioned superstitious behaviour and different cognitive mechanisms supporting magic, there is a dynamic interaction between the practice of magic and miracle stories. Miracle is probably the most widespread genre in early Christian literature. Miracles provide the bulk of the gospels, two of them starting with Jesus' miraculous birth and all four of them (in their present form) ending with his resurrection (or at least empty tomb). The apostles perform numerous miracles in the Book of Acts. Miracles fill the pages of the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, apocryphal gospels, and the Acts of the Martyrs. The tradition goes on unbroken in hagiography and continues in present-day (charismatic) preaching and the Roman Catholic cult of the saints. Miracle stories have always been popular, independent of whether magical practices are widespread or not in a given culture. For example, the adventures of Harry Potter attract broad audiences, notwithstanding the fact that most of the readers and viewers do not practise any form of magic in everyday life. Why are miracles so consistently pervasive across space and time?

From the perspective of modern Western readers, miracle stories (often) go against modern scientific knowledge. According to modern common sense, illness can be healed by killing off pathogens with the help of antibiotics, removing damaged tissue, and mending broken bones, not by prayer and the laying on of hands, let alone by words uttered from a distance. This is, however, hardly the full story. Without knowing about bacteria, Newtonian mechanics, and Copernican cosmology, ancient intellectuals expressed scepticism about miracles. The most famous among them is probably Lucian of Samosata, who especially reprimanded the use of miracle stories in historical narratives (*Philops., Ver. hist*. 1–4). Long before Lucian, arguing probably against Herodotus, Thucydides required that no fables, however entertaining, should be included in a work of history (*On the Peloponnesian War* 1.22). Both Josephus and Philo, while zealously dedicated to Jewish religion, were reserved when it came to miracles (Delling 1958; Moehring 1973; Duling 1985; Eve 2002: 8–35). It is obvious that some ancient elite thinkers had a sense of scepticism or at least reservation about miracle stories, in spite of holding a worldview in which the supernatural played an important role. Attitudes towards miracle seem to depend on more than just modern or pre-modern worldviews.

In order to understand what attracts us to miracles intuitively, we have to take a step back and think about learning and culture from a psychological perspective. Human culture is made possible by the accumulation of knowledge across generations. But

our cumulative tradition comes at a price: we cannot test every piece of wisdom we learn from our parents and teachers. Even modern Western education, committed to nurturing critical thinking, is based on believing things on authority in first instance. Although we do question tradition and occasionally revise beliefs we have learned, there are more general and automatic strategies in place to optimize learning: we tend to follow people who are members of the in-group, whom we perceive as successful and prestigious, who give costly signals (so-called credibility-enhancing signals) of commitment to what they teach, and in general we do what the majority of people do around us (Shennan 2002; Richerson and Boyd 2005: 162–4; Henrich 2009).

Even if we are not able to validate the truth content of a piece of culturally acquired information, however, its actual content matters for its cultural success. Maturationally natural ontology develops in children consistently in a wide range of external circumstances and enables people to respond to information in the environment quickly and efficiently (McCauley 2011: 31–82). For example, we know that animals move, humans speak, and tools are designed for some purpose, and we can interact with them accordingly, without testing those features in every instance. It is important to note that such ontological divisions are not necessarily identical with categories that people use to describe the world when we ask them to do so explicitly (or the ontological categories that philosophers establish). Maturationally natural ontological categories include HUMAN, ANIMAL, PLANT, ARTEFACT, and (natural) OBJECT (Keil 1979: 48; Atran 1989; Barrett 2008). A donkey that talks (e.g. Acts of Thomas 39–41 and 68–81) or a statue that hears what people say violate expectations about animals and artefacts, respectively. Such ideas will be remembered longer than common-sense ideas. However, if the violations are multiplied, the advantage diminishes. As a consequence, Pascal Boyer (1994; 2001) suggested, minimally counterintuitive ideas are passed on across generations at higher rates than either ordinary or maximally counterintuitive items.

Boyer's theory generated a great deal of experimental research, which yielded some insights that are particularly relevant for the study of miracle stories. Empirical evidence suggested that the advantage is most pronounced in the long-term retention of ideas (Barrett and Nyhof 2001; Norenzayan and Atran 2004). This is a significant result since stories are constantly changing in memory and oral transmission will be influenced by such changes. Another relevant problem is the combination of counterintuitive and intuitive ideas. When Norenzayan and Atran (2004) examined how lists of items (rather than individual concepts) are remembered, packages that had the greatest chance of being recalled after a week contained only a few minimally counterintuitive concepts (such as 'thirsty door'), the majority of concepts in the package being intuitive (in the sense of not violating ontological schemata, such as 'closing door'). In a subsequent study, Norenzayan and colleagues analysed folktales from the point of view of minimally counterintuitive details (Norenzayan et al. 2006). They found that successful folktales typically contained two or three counterintuitive elements on the average, whereas unsuccessful folktales could contain any number from zero to six. Recent experimental studies identified a number of additional factors that influence the effect of counterintuitive traits on the memorability of an idea (Gonce et al. 2006; Tweney et al.

2006; Slone et al. 2007). It has also been suggested that the presence of agency might be more decisive than counterintuitiveness (Porubanova et al. 2013; Porubanova et al. 2014). It is probable that the interplay of several such factors influences the cultural success of a story and further work is needed to clarify their respective contributions.

In some miracles, identifying the counterintuitive element is rather straightforward. For example, the multiplication of bread in Mark 6:39–44 and parallels violates maturationally natural expectations about artefacts. We do not expect natural objects or artefacts (such as bread) to multiply spontaneously, something we only attribute to living things. Another food miracle, the changing of water into wine (John 2:2–11), also implies a crossing of ontological boundaries. Whereas water is a natural substance, wine is an artefact. Arguably, we do not expect natural objects to transform into artefacts without human labour: artefacts are produced by investing time and energy. Miracles about resurrecting dead people are strictly counterintuitive (2 Kgs 4:32–5, 13:20–1; Mark 5:21–43 and parallels; Luke 7:11–15; John 11:1–44; Acts 20:9–12). Dead bodies and decomposing corpses are not expected to resume biological function (John 11:38–44). In the Acts of Peter, the apostle brings a smoked fish back to life in (Chapter 13, cf. Herodotus 9.120.1) and later resurrects a young boy (Chapter 28). The boundary between objects (or tools) and animals is crossed in the *Arabic Infancy Gospel* 36, where the child Jesus models animals from clay and makes them behave (run, fly, eat) like real animals.

Many other miracles, however, lack a strictly counterintuitive element. For example, catching extraordinary amounts of fish (Luke 5:1–11) at an unusual time of the day is unexpected but does not violate innate ontological categories. Healing with saliva (e.g. Mark 7:33) is an intuitive technique that relies on demonstrable physiological effects: saliva does contain healing substances (Oudhoff et al. 2008). Many therapies in biblical literature change intuitive healing processes (which might or might not comply with modern scientific theory) into paradoxical (but not strictly counterintuitive) events by adding extraordinary difficulties. For example, the man healed in John 9 has been blind since birth, and the one at the pool of Bethsaida (John 5:1–20) had been crippled for thirty-eight years. Healing from a distance is an ambiguous feature of some miracle stories (Matt. 8:5–13; Luke 7:1–10; John 4:51–3). Generally speaking, we do not expect physical interactions to take place at a distance (Spelke 1990; Spelke and Kinzler 2007; Barrett 2008). This seems to be contradicted by the findings of the voodoo doll experiment and related studies discussed above, suggesting that people do have intuitions about being able to influence other people's well-being at a distance. Note, however, that the participants in these experiments had intuitive responses to their own actions (rather than reacting to a miracle story) as well as having strong emotions towards the people they believed to manipulate from a distance. Thus, miracles stories featuring healing from a distance could be counterintuitive and provide support for performing magical actions under some specific circumstances.

Healings and other miracles often receive a counterintuitive edge because they are attributed to divine intervention (as is the rule in biblical literature) or because the condition that necessitates them (such as illness) is explained by divine punishment or demonic influence. Gods and spirits are always counterintuitive because they combine

human psychological and other features with elements that contradict expectations about humans: being invisible, being present at more than one physical location at a time, transforming themselves into different shapes, having infinite knowledge, etc. (Boyer 2001: 65–91; Pyysiäinen 2009; Czachesz 2012a; 2012b: 141–80). The involvement of counterintuitive agency in miracles (as opposed to featuring objects that change shape or levitate, for example) makes a difference. Experimental studies (Steenstra 2005; Porubanova et al. 2014) suggested that (counterintuitive) concepts involving agency are remembered better than other concepts. Boyer argued that counterintuitive agents matter more than other counterintuitive ideas because they have minds, are capable of social interaction, and make moral judgements (2001: 137–67). Further, as we have seen above, the ratio of counterintuitive and 'ordinary' details in a given text influences the memorability of the text. Counterintuitive details not only help texts remain in memory longer, but they are also attention-grabbing. As a consequence, we can expect that stories containing a certain amount of miraculous details have a good chance both of being noticed easier and of being remembered longer than other texts.

Yet another factor that contributes to the salience of miracle stories in cultural memory is their emotional content. Empirical research demonstrated that if such elements are added to a story, they increase the memorability of all details of the narrative (Cahill and McGaugh 1995; Laney et al. 2004). In miracle stories, we can read about people who are seriously ill and desperately seek healing (e.g. Mark 2:1–12), parents who seek help for their sick or already dead children (e.g. Mark 1:21–43), as well as extreme (e.g. lameness, blindness), repulsive (e.g. 'leprosy'), or spectacular (e.g. 'demoniacs') symptoms and diseases. Many of the vivid details in the stories are likely to elicit empathy, fear, and disgust, which are archaic emotions (in terms of evolutionary history) and are triggered quickly and automatically. Further, after such a start, miracle stories are likely to evoke emotions of relief when difficulties are miraculously overcome in the end.

In this section, we suggested that miracle stories spread for reasons that are independent of actual magical practice. This does not mean, however, that magic is completely independent of miracle. Repeated exposure to miracle stories obviously familiarizes listeners with ideas and provides them with narrative schemata and other means to make sense of them. Such stories may be embedded in social and institutional contexts (ancestral tradition, mythology) that enhance their credibility and significance. In this way, miracle stories can provide cultural interpretation and positive feedback to the superstitious behavioural patterns that develop from a different background. Thus, the miracle stories recorded in the New Testament and other early Christian writings could play an important role in the magical practice of the Christians. The miracles of the apostles proved that one could legitimately (from a theological point of view) and efficiently invoke God's power (for example, by calling Jesus' name) to perform healing and other acts of magic. They offered an explanatory framework, according to which the Holy Spirit was a more powerful *paredros* than others in the cultural environment of Christians. Finally, they suggested a repertoire of magical manipulations, such as Paul's

gestures when he resurrected Eutychus in Troas (Acts 20:9–12) or the use of his aprons to heal people in Ephesus.

Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the academic use of the term magic, suggesting that in spite of the troubled history of the concept in both ancient and modern usage, it remains a helpful category for studying religion and related cultural forms. We focused on cognitive mechanisms that underlie the theory and practice of magic cross-culturally. Magic is based on the elementary learning mechanism of superstitious conditioning, gains support from implicit and explicit (cross-cultural as well as culture-specific) cognitive processes, and interacts with miracle traditions. The last component was especially strong in earliest Christianity, where stories about the miracles of Jesus and the apostles were accompanied by evidence of and encouragement to perform miracles by both experts and ordinary members of the movement.

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CHAPTER 12

COMMUNAL MEALS

RICHARD S. ASCOUGH

Introduction

Communal meals in Roman antiquity were framed as semi-public events. While not everyone was invited—indeed, only a small cadre of the especially chosen took part—banquets were often located and structured so that they could be observed, to a greater or lesser degree. Within the meal setting itself, seating arrangements were such that each participant was also an observer. The rituals and ritualized behaviour that were embedded into the communal meals served primarily to negotiate social relations among participants and observers. Strong social bonds were forged and maintained among those present at the meal, and when fractures occurred through aberrant behaviour, regulations ensured that decorum was re-established. At the same time, Roman social differentiation was also clear and obvious throughout the meal, and not all participants were treated equally. Such social tension was, however, both inscribed by and held in check through the meal rituals. While the communal bonds created within the meal setting provide a glimmer for overcoming the cultural differentiation among the participants, the ritualized differentiation within various aspects of the meal ends up enacting the extant hierarchical stratifications of Roman society and thus ultimately mirrors, legitimates, and reinforces such cultural values to the group.

In examining the Roman communal meal rituals, we take a rather functionalist approach, so it is important to recognize at the outset that while functionalism per se has fallen out of fashion in the study of religion, there is still much to be learned through an examination of the effects of rituals, both on the participants and on those who observe, or are at least aware of, the rituals. As Uro notes, 'Understood as *one* explanation for ritual behaviour, functionalist reasoning has hardly lost its relevance. It is very intuitive to think that collective rituals often provide a kind of glue that keeps social groups together' (2010: 223, his emphasis). There are consequences to rituals, intentional or not, that need examination (Grimes 2014: 298, 301). Approaching rituals in this way is not, of course, exhaustive of all possible understandings, but does provide insight into how

rituals, in our case in the setting of communal dining, helped participants navigate and negotiate social networks.

The Prevalence of Communal Meals

Meals in antiquity took place in many different ways, as is the case today. One needs only think of the difference between eating a regular family meal in the home, sharing a meal with extended family on a holiday occasion, eating at a fast food restaurant, attending a formal banquet, or grabbing a quick bite on the way to work or school. In all instances, food is consumed, but in each case, there are distinct differences, such as the type of food consumed, the setting, companions present (or not), and the formal and informal rules that govern not only the manner in which the food is presented and consumed but also the behaviours that are manifest around such activities. Not unexpectedly, Roman communal meals were likewise complicated, and of necessity we must speak in somewhat broad terms of typicalities rather than nuance, being representative rather than comprehensive in our summary (cf. Smith 2003: 12).

Those living in the Roman period ate at multiple times during the day—what we might call breakfast, lunch, and dinner—and in different ways, but of particular importance was the evening meal, the *cena* or *convivium* in Latin or *deipnon* or *syssition* in Greek (Plutarch, *Mor*., *Quaest. Conv*. 726C–D [Clement, LCL]), which in many instances extended beyond family dinner to become a social event to which a network of contacts could be invited (cf. Smith 2003: 20). Given the fluidity between the public and private spheres in Roman antiquity, it is no surprise that communal dining was never truly a private affair (Dunbabin 2003: 36). The *cena* could be a public meal on a grand scale or mark some special occasion, often being linked in some way to rites of passage (Donahue 2004: 8), such as birthdays, coming of age ceremonies (when boys receive the *toga virilis*), weddings, funerals, or memorials for the deceased (see Smith 2003: 38–42 for descriptions; these are examples of what Grignon calls 'exceptional commensality' [2001: 27–8; cf. Ascough 2008: 38–41]). A *convivium*, on the other hand, tended to be a much smaller dinner party to which one invited friends for fellowship and enjoyment (Donahue 2004: 9). Both, however, were times for sustenance and for socializing. As Plutarch records in a saying from an otherwise unknown Hagias, 'We invite each other not for the sake of eating and drinking, but for drinking *together* and eating *together*' (*Mor*., *Quaest. Conv*. 643A, LCL, my emphasis). In both the *cena* and the *convivium*, however, rituals played an important role.

There are a number of sources available that provide data for understanding Graeco-Roman meal practices and from which we can trace patterns of behaviours: literary, epigraphic, papyrological, and archaeological (for a more detailed description of the vast swath of the evidence for ancient meal practices, see Klinghardt 1996: 21–174). The primary data are generally drawn from the literary tradition, although such texts tend to reflect the mores and practices of the elite. Authors such as Cato, Columella, Apicius,

Petronius, Martial, and Juvenal are, for the most part, concerned with agriculture and recipes, although do give descriptions of the various courses of banquets and provide some information on the general rules of dining etiquette (Giacosa 1992: 5). Plutarch discusses Roman etiquette in his *Moralia*, particularly *Quaestiones Convivales*, written at the end of the first century CE. It is, however, an idealized account of the setting and clearly the rules were not always observed (Faas 1994: 48). In contrast, Petronius' first-century CE satire *The Satyricon* includes a section called 'Dinner with Trimalchio' which serves as an anti-etiquette manual—what not to do in hosting a banquet—from which we can learn much about what was expected at communal meals. While it drips with satire and somewhat outrageous overstatement, it most likely has at its core a fairly accurate reflection of the excesses of elite social banquets. One of the most complete descriptions of Roman meal practices is found in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists*, an account of a series of banquets held in an elite household, written in the early third century CE, but including quotes and summaries of many earlier writers. Although it is a fictional account overall, it provides invaluable information for understanding Roman meal rituals.

Lest one think that communal banqueting was the purview of the elite alone, there was a 'trickle-down effect' of elaborate elite banqueting practices to the non-elite, as can be seen in Varro's complaint that 'the ever proliferating *epula* of the lowly *collegia* at Rome' ends up increasing food prices in the markets (*Rust*. 3.2.16, cited in D'Arms 1999: 311; cf. Donahue 2004: 89). One of the richest epigraphic repositories for communal meals among the non-elite comes from the inscriptions and papyri of the vast array of these Graeco-Roman associations (see Kloppenborg, Chapter 9 in this volume), which imitated elite practices (Smith 2003: 95–123; Ascough 2012). Some groups even designated themselves explicitly with reference to meals, either in their collective name, such as 'the banqueters' (*thoiniētai; AGRW* 75 = *IGLSkythia* III 68, A, Kallatis, 50–100 CE), or the name of their leader, such as the 'head of the banquet' (*trikliniarchos*) who oversees a group of thirty-eight 'fellow-banqueters' (*synklitai; AGRW* 51 = *IG* X/2.1, Thessalonike, late I CE). Many of these small groups—formed on the basis of households, ethnic/immigrant status, neighbourhoods, shared occupation, or common purpose (cf. Harland 2003: 28–9) —set aside a particular day or days for weekly, monthly, or yearly meetings that included banqueting (Ascough 2012). Those who had their own buildings often included space designed and designated for shared meals (see Ascough 2016: 551–62).

In the (little) artwork that survives from antiquity, images of dining appear predominantly in domestic and funerary settings. 'They show groups of banqueters or single participants, or present cognate subjects or extracts from larger scenes: the servants, ready to attend on the guests; food and drink that might be set before them; and the entertainment that they might be offered' (Dunbabin 2003: 5). The domestic art appears as painting on walls, particularly in dining rooms (and predominantly from Pompeii and Herculaneum) and on mosaic pavements. In funerary contexts, dining scenes can be found on wall paintings in tombs and in statues and in reliefs on various objects such as sarcophagi, urns, altars, and stelae (Dunbabin 2003: 5–6).

Such data are important for (re-)constructing Graeco-Roman communal meal rituals, but in using this data we must, of course, proceed with caution. As Hal Taussig points out, applying ritual theory to the social practices of the ancient world is a very different process than applying theory to modern, observable rituals (2009: 56). By relying on second-hand accounts there is always a chance—indeed, a high degree of likelihood—that the ancient authors have not fully or accurately represented the proceedings. All the events are filtered through their own biases. The once-removed nature of our data thus compounds the problem of interpreter bias, which is present in any use of data. Yet, such is the limitation of historical investigation and so we proceed, albeit cautiously, knowing that we must always take care to determine 'to what extent a banquet reference in the data represents social reality or merely an idealized, imaginative reconstruction of it' (Smith 2003: 6).

Form and Setting of Communal Dining

Dennis Smith has rightly proposed a common Roman banquet tradition centred on the *triclinium* arrangement that was adapted to various settings such as: everyday meals, symposia, sacrificial meals, mystery meals, festival meals, and ethnically specific meals (e.g. Jewish meals; Smith 2003: 3; cf. Donahue 2004: 36). It is clear that the form of the banquet 'had become the pattern for all formalized meals in the Mediterranean world' in the Roman period (Smith 2003: 2). Thus, while there were minor regional variations and nuanced differences among social groups, 'the evidence suggests that meals took similar forms and shared similar meanings and interpretations across a broad range of the ancient world' (Smith 2003: 2).

Dinner generally took place from just before sundown until late in the evening (Smith 2003: 22). Upon entering the venue, guests would gather in the atrium if in a house, or some other open space if elsewhere, before entering the dining room to take their places. The *triclinium* was a set of three couches, each of which could comfortably accommodate three guests, and situated so as to form an open U-shape. Although sometimes a *triclinium* could be expanded to accommodate more diners, either through larger couches or the addition of more couches (cf. Athenaeus, *Deipn*. 142C), nine diners was thought to be ideal as symbolized by the nine muses who might inspire the guests: 'Clio, history, Euterpe, flute-playing and tragedy, Thalia, comedy, Melpomene, song, Terpsichore, dance, Erato, poetry, Polyhumnia, lyre-playing, Urania, astronomy and Calliope, philosophy' (Faas 1994: 56). If the number of guests exceeded the reasonable accommodation of the *triclinium*, one or more other *triclinia* might be set up for them. And although large venues were not unheard of, the ideal was small, intimate gatherings of nine to fifteen diners, so that even some meeting houses of large associations had dedicated dining space that would restrict the numbers at a sitting to no more than fifteen participants (e.g, *AGRW* B14 and B19; cf. Ascough 2016: 559–60).

The preferred posture on the *triclinium* itself was to lie on the left side, freeing the right arm and hand for the taking of food to be placed on a plate held in the left hand or placed on a bench-table in front of the diners (see Smith 2003: 14–17). Artistic renditions of meals, however, rarely reflect such static poses, and show diners in 'a relaxed, disorderly fashion' (Faas 1994: 56). Often guests would eat lying on their stomach and then turn onto their side afterwards (Plutarch, *Mor*., *Quaest. Conv*. 679F–680A). Non-elite diners and uninvited guests such as gate-crashers ('shadows') and 'parasites' (see Plutarch, *Mor*., *Quaest. Conv*. 706F–710A; Faas 1994: 60–1) were often required to sit at the feet of the invited guests or on chairs. If women and children were present at the banquet, they would be required to sit, either on chairs or at the feet of their male companion or on a separate couch, thus differentiating their social position from the males reclining on the couches (Lucian, *Symp*., 13–15; Smith 2003: 11; cf. Visser 1991: 172–3). This changed, however, throughout the Roman period to women reclining on couches (Smith 2003: 43; Plutarch, *Mor*., *Quaest. Conv*. 619D). One or more low, three-legged circular tables stood in the centre space, sometimes covered with a tablecloth. From here, diners helped themselves to the food. In larger rooms, low benches might be placed in front of the couches, from which food could be taken. Once a course finished, the entire tabletop would be taken back to the kitchen, the leftovers to be eaten by the slaves (cf. Plutarch, *Mor*., *Quaest. Conv*. 703D). Fresh food was piled onto a new table and brought in for the next course.

The food itself was eaten using fingers or spoons, while knives were reserved for the cutting of meat (Giacosa 1992: 23). Although diners were urged to take small amounts of food with their fingers, suggesting some delicacy, any remnants of food were simply tossed to the ground for the slaves to clean up (Giacosa 1992: 23–4). Thus, from a modern perspective, there is a curious juxtaposition of fine etiquette and vulgar slovenliness. The meal proper in Roman times was preceded with appetizers and often followed by 'an extended period of relaxed drinking during which the entertainment of the evening would be presented' called a *convivium* in Latin and *symposion* in Greek (Smith 2003: 27). Such entertainment might include games (e.g. *kottabos*, see below), female flute players (who sometimes also provided sexual favours), musicians, dancers, acrobats, riddles, stories, and extended philosophical discussion (cf. Plutarch, *Mor*., *Quaest. Conv*. 710B–713F).

Although many houses, especially larger houses and villas, typically included dedicated space for banqueting, communal meals could also be held in other settings such as gardens, religious sanctuaries, cemeteries and tombs, porticoes, tents, and association meeting halls, the latter of which might include many rooms designed for a *triclinium* (Dunbabin 2003: 50–1; Ascough 2016). Such rooms allowed the couches to be arranged to facilitate shared tables and easy communication; 'The same form was used for domestic, public, and religious settings, supporting the argument that the same meal customs were followed for banquets regardless of the setting or context' (Smith 2003: 25). In the early Roman imperial period, the typical form of the dining space followed that of the Greeks in being a square or rectangular room, around the edges of which would be placed the beds or benches of one or more *triclinia*, while in later centuries a single semicircular couch (*stibadium* or *sigma*) came into use (Dunbabin 2003: 43).

Given the organization of the *triclinium* setting and the intimacy it provided for participants even while exposing them to wider view, both to themselves and to others, it is clear than Roman communal meals were 'performative' events in the sense described by Robert Grimes (see esp. 2006). As Dunbabin notes:

> Few things are more revealing of the significance that a society attaches to the process of communal eating and drinking than the physical layout of the spaces used for that purpose. The size of the group that can readily be accommodated, and the arrangement of the diners within that group, profoundly affect their ability to communicate their relationship to one another; the whole atmosphere and character of the occasion are dependent upon these factors. (2003: 36; cf. Visser 1991: 31)

Roman writers describe architectural features and decorative elements of dining facilities in 'visually expressive terms' and emphasize both the visual and aural entertainment that accompanied the banqueting (see D'Arms 1999: 302).

Plutarch makes reference to elite banquets as 'a spectacle and a show' (*Mor*., *Cupid. Diviti*. 528B [De Lacy and Einarson, LCL]) and thus 'introduces the idea of upper-class banquets as consciously performative and theatrical events, around which, in imaginative literature, a vocabulary of viewing tends to cluster' (D'Arms 1999: 301). The food itself was brought in with great fanfare—'more for show than for nutritional use' (Macrobius, *Sat*. 7.5.32, cited in D'Arms 1999: 303) and was consumed using elaborate table settings (D'Arms 1999: 302). While such literary accounts are not necessarily reflective of actual practices, they do establish a sense that meals were thought of in terms of performance and display, both to those participating in them and to those 'observing' from outside (D'Arms 1999: 303, 307–8).

Ritualized Social Bonding

Roman communal dining rituals model the values of the surrounding culture insofar as they assert and reinscribe the strong status boundaries that define individuals and groups in a collectivist culture. Invitation to, or exclusion from, a banquet serves to differentiate insiders from outsiders. From the point of entry onwards ritualized behaviour serves to mirror group values to the banqueters, thus reinforcing and legitimating these values within the group (cf. Ascough 2012). At the same time, meal rituals can and do model challenges to dominant cultural values and have the potential to become mechanisms for enacting societal change. This too is mirrored back to the group and frames their self-understanding. Dining rituals thus function as instruments through which a group negotiates its identity, both to outside observers and among the insider participants themselves (cf. Grignon 2001; Donahue 2004; Ascough 2008). As such, these rituals both depict and reinforce social arrangements among dining participants while

also increasing the social tensions the diners experience with the dominant cultural values (Grimes 2014: 294–337).

Although we noted above that communal meals were performative events, they were also locations in which group boundaries were set and as a result of ritual performance boundaries were declared and maintained. By choosing to dine together, individuals signalled to one another a desire for connection while also separating themselves from those on the other side. The rituals around entrance into the dining space emphasized such distinctions. In a banquet held in a private house, for example, guests gathered in the atrium until all the invitees had arrived (for details, see Faas 1994: 50). Non-attenders would not only see them enter, but could look through the *vestibulum*, the lobby, to see who had been admitted. In order to attend a banquet, one must receive an invitation, either in person or in writing (many of which are preserved among the papyri in Egypt; Smith 2003: 23), which in itself was a form of differentiating group insiders and outsiders.

While they waited, guests could view not only the mosaics and frescoes that decorated the atrium, but also the family's treasured works of art, which would be put on display for the occasion. Guests might even choose to worship at the *lararium* (the domestic altar), the doors of which would have been opened for this special occasion. There, they would see, and perhaps honour, the household gods (Faas 1994: 50). Such acts of devotion would create a sense of bonding not only with the host's family but also with one another gathered before the altar.

Upon being ushered into the dining room itself, guests stepped over the threshold with their right foot first in order to avoid bad luck (cf. Petronius, *Sat*. 30). Inside, slaves washed their hands and their feet in a ritual of purification. Although feet were always dirty due to open shoes and muddy streets, 'above all, foot washing was symbolic: in removing one's shoes, one was shaking off earthly bonds. One could no longer run into the street but had entered the spiritual sphere of the *triclinium*' (Faas 1994: 53; cf. Smith 2003: 27). As Visser notes, after having described various ritual actions that occur before meals in different times and cultures, 'All these complicated manoeuvres have been devised by their various cultures in order to make the person who is about to eat *conscious* of what he or she is doing, and to force the members of the group to take notice of one another' (Visser 1991: 163, my emphasis). The ritualized process of waiting and then entering the dining space serves to demarcate who is 'inside' the group and reinforces that there are also those who are excluded, not just the slaves who wash their hands and feet but also others who remain physically outside.

Assertion of group boundaries in this manner is a form of what Grignon calls 'segregative commensality'. Boundaries are established between those who are included in the banqueting and those who are not as 'a way to assert or to strengthen the "We" by pointing out and rejecting, as symbols of otherness, the "not We", strangers, rivals, enemies, superiors or inferiors' (Grignon 2001: 29). Yet these boundaries are neither random nor porous; the pre-existing social groups to which an individual belongs often determine a banquet invitation list. Yet within the confines of the meal itself social bonds are forged; 'satisfaction of the most individual of needs becomes a means of creating

community' (Visser 1991: 1). Plutarch talks of the 'friend-making character of the dining-table' (*Mor*., *Quaest. Conv*. 612D [Clement, LCL]) and notes that 'A guest comes to share not only meat, wine, and dessert, but conversation, fun, and the amiability that leads to friendship' (*Mor*., *Quaest. Conv*. 660B [Hoffleit, LCL]). The rituals and ritualization associated with shared meals broker the social bonding, since 'ritual, whether secular or sacred, binds groups together, ensuring their harmonious functioning by generating and maintaining orders of meaning, purpose, and value' (Stephenson 2015: 38).

Once in the dining space itself, participants took their place on the couches. As we noted above, the *triclinium* was constructed to maximize visibility among the diners, with the focus of the gaze oriented not only towards the food but also towards one another (cf. D'Arms 1999: 306). The sharing of food thus allows individuals to observe who is accepted into the group and, by their absence, who is excluded; 'Because of the clear boundary-defining symbolism of table fellowship in the ancient world, banquets became a significant feature of various identifiable social groups' (Smith 2003: 9; Douglas 1975: 231). The shared conviviality was strong, and allowed group members to bond with one another (Dunbabin 2003: 99; Smith 2003: 9). In some cases, groups even articulated this shared commitment to one another, acknowledging their responsibilities to help one another in times of crisis, particularly financial debt (see *AGRW* 300 = *PMich* V 243, Tebtynis, 14–37 CE; *AGRW* 301 = *PMich* V 244, Tebtynis, 43 CE; cf. *PCairo Dem* 30606, Tebtynis, 158/7 BCE; *GRA* I 8 = *IG* II^2 1275, Piraeus, III–II BCE).

The ritualized posture of reclining served a dual purpose. On the one hand, the act of reclining in and of itself was a signal about one's social location; 'Because reclining was a posture that required that one be served, it tended to be associated with a class that owned servants' (Smith 2003: 44). By reclining together, people who might otherwise be demarcated as having different status due to such markers as family origins, ethnicity, or occupation, could be together in one unified configuration (Taussig 2009: 69). At the same time, even within this configuration, banqueters are reminded of their social location through their placement around the *triclinium*, or, in the case of women, their having been pushed to the margins.

Where one reclined on the *triclinium* was regulated by social convention. Diners were divided into three groups, and guests were seated according to their social rank relative to one another (Smith 2003: 31). The central couch was reserved for guests of honour while the couch to its right was for the host and his family. The couch to the left of the centre couch was the least favoured place and was for the remaining guests. The goal, of course, was to be invited into the highest position possible—the guest of honour. But in any given setting, the closer one was to that position the better. Plutarch includes a lengthy discussion of the protocols around how one seats guests at a banquet (*Mor*., *Quaest. Conv*. 615D–619F), although the opinion of the speaker's father perhaps best encapsulates the prevailing cultural mores at the time: 'For the man of quality does not have his honour and his station in the world, yet fail to receive recognition in the place he occupies at dinner; nor will a host drink to one of his guests before another, yet overlook their distinctions in placing them at the table' (*Mor*., *Quaest. Conv*. 616B [Clement, LCL]). Those who possess the most honour must be recognized as such at the table.

At the banquet those who have contributed significantly to a group or to the wider culture are not only given the place of honour on the central couch of the *triclinium*. Their status is recognized in a number of other ways. For example, a first-century BCE inscription from Egypt records decrees in which an association (*synagogē*) of fellow-farmers established a number of honours for a patron whose largess included the donation of a meeting hall. Although the group intends to honour him in public, the first decree notes that he will receive special recognition at communal meals: 'it was resolved that he shall have a seat on the first couch at the banquet for life'. Should he choose to give more funds to the association, they promise that 'when they hold their banquet, a statue of him will be crowned during the toasts, and three men, who he shall propose to be honoured, will be received into the synod without an entrance fee' (*AGRW* 287 = *IDelta* I 446, Psenamosis, Egypt, 67 BCE; translation by Kloppenborg). A few years later, and after further largess, another decree, recorded on the same inscription but from 64 BCE, declares further honours for him including the following:

> And it is further resolved that he be named priest for life and that he be free from further dues, and free from contributions for the banquets and free from monthly dues and free from the services (*leitourgia*) and exempt from levies, and will receive a double portion of food. And if he is not present at the banquet, it will be sent to him, and his statue will be crowned by the association at the toasts with a special wreath.

Even after he dies, the association promises to maintain the annual observances, including the special crown at the toasts and banquets.

One particularly illustrative example can be found in an inscription that records the honours granted by a mixed gender association to their priestess, written underneath a three-panel relief depicting a banqueting scene (*GRA* II 99 = *IApamBith* 35, Apameia Myrleia area, Bithynia, Asia Minor, 119 or 104 BCE; translation by Harland). The text reads

> The male (*thiasitai*) and female (*thiasitides*) members of the society crowned Stratonike daughter of Menekrates, who was priestess of Mother Cybele and Apollo in the 178th year, with a crown with a band engraved on a plaque that was announced and another crown with a band that was announced in the synagogue (*synagogē*) of Zeus, since she acted in a benevolent manner.

The first relief depicts a sacrificial sheep beside an altar set before Cybele and Apollo. The middle panel shows members of the association reclining together eating and drinking, while they watch the musicians and dancers perform, as depicted in the bottom panel. Not only do we get a good sense of the form of the post-sacrifice banquet, we hear that the priestess was honoured with two separate crowns, both of which were publicly proclaimed. From the relief panels, we can presume these proclamations took place during a banquet.

The conferring of honours—particularly proclamations and crownings—is seen in a number of associations and is part of the ritualized recognition of special persons. Such activities serve a dual function, beyond merely guaranteeing the happiness of the recipient and thus the likelihood of further benefaction. Clearly, these public recognitions set the individual apart and confirm his or her special standing within the group. But perhaps more importantly, the communal activity of proclaiming praise and crowning people and/or statues consolidates the group by confirming to them their collective special status. Unlike the others—those not invited into the banqueting space—they are recipients of special favours. In performing the rituals of granting honours, they forge a collective identity that sets them apart from others. The inscribing of these behaviours as decrees not only serves to confirm this to the insiders but also communicates it to those outside the group. Lest there be any doubt, the association members, who are often named in the inscriptions, are communicating how special they are as a group.

As a repercussion of the strong social bonds created by ritualized behaviours at Roman communal meals, there is clear evidence that social breakdown also took place. This should not be surprising given both the cultural context of competition for honour and dominance, and a setting in which persons are seated in close proximity to one another while consuming large amounts of alcohol, among other things. Thus, banquets came to be portrayed as times of drunkenness and excessive indulgence in food and sex (see, for example, Philo's condemnation of the associations; *AGRW* L8–L10). Petronius' *Dinner with Trimalchio* is a good case in point. Trimalchio is a former slave who gained excessive riches and bought his freedom and now uses his wealth to host lavish, ostentatious, and decadent dinner parties with every sort of delicacy imaginable. Although the narrative itself is overstated for effect, the satire is aimed at the banqueting practices of the elite, and more particularly those who have the wealth of the elite but not the pedigree—the 'new money' class that embodies 'all the excesses of bad taste, all the ridiculous things a boor-become-millionaire could do and say' (Giacosa 1992: 9).

In contrast, in order to preserve proper decorum, rules of etiquette were established to govern collective behaviour. More than simple rules and regulations, such regulations reflect ritualized behaviour. 'Table manners are rituals because they are the way in which it is commonly agreed that eating *should* be performed' (Visser 1991: 31, her emphasis; cf. Smith 2003: 10). For example, three rather permanent elegiac couplets inscribed on the wall of a dining room in Pompeii suggest regular behaviours that needed to be controlled in the meal setting:

> Let the water wash your feet, and let the slave wipe them dry; let a cloth drape the couch, but be careful with my linen.
>
> Turn your lustful looks and your wheedling eyes away from other men's wives, and put on a decorous expression.
>
> Postpone disputes and tedious wrangling if you can—otherwise, turn your steps back to your own house. (*CIL* IV 7698, in McKeown 2010: 156–7)

Many groups also formalized regulations to govern participants' behaviour at banquets. Fines could be assessed on those who use any abusive language towards the leaders (*AGRW* 300 = *PMich* V 243, Tebtynis, 14–37 CE) or for attempts to shove in front of another member in order to secure a more desirable place at the table (*AGRW* 310 = *CIL* XIV 2112, Lanuvium, 136 CE). The regulations of the Iobacchoi in Athens, inscribed onto one of the columns in their meeting hall (see *AGRW* B2), list a number of rules governing behaviour during communal meals and meetings, prefaced with: 'If one of those who enters does not pay the entrance fee to the priest or the vice-priest, he shall be expelled from the banquet until he pays and he shall pay in whatever way the priest orders' (*AGRW* 7 = *IG* II^2 1368, 166/165 CE; translation by Harland and Kloppenborg). There follows a litany of a number of unruly behaviours that the group imagines might take place—most likely because they have proven to be common behaviours at past meetings: reciting a speech without permission, singing out of turn, applauding, sitting in someone else's seat, causing a disturbance or being disorderly, hurling insults, abusing someone, beginning a fight, throwing punches, and taking an assailant to court rather than reporting it to the leaders. Towards the end of the inscription various official positions are described, including that of 'the officer in charge of order' who bears 'the wand (*thyrsos*) of the god for anyone who is disorderly or creates a disturbance'. His duties are clear:

> Now if the wand is laid on anyone—and the priest or the head of the Bacchic-devotees approves—the one who made the disturbance shall leave the banquet hall. If he refuses, those who have been appointed by the priests as 'horses' (i.e. bouncers) shall take him outside of the door. And he shall be liable to the punishment that applies to those who fight.

Anyone exhibiting any of the disruptive behaviours outlined above is to be removed from the meal and fined. Without such regulations, the meal rituals would fall into disarray, and with that the group cohesion would begin to fray.

During the meal itself, food was brought into the dining room on trays or portable tables by slaves (Smith 2003: 28) and elaborately presented. Even here, in the serving of the meal, etiquette carried with it symbolic value that signalled to diners their relative position within the group, just as did the dining position. The more socially elevated a person was considered to be, the larger portion he received, and often with better quality food (Donahue 2005: 97). Thus, dining position was not the only marker of social differentiation; within the distribution of food there is a 'pattern of social relations being expressed' (Douglas 1975: 231).

Once the main course concluded, the banquet would transition to the symposium, with entertainment and/or broad conversation flowing around a variety of topics, enhanced with wine. Plutarch gives a sampling of the types of questions discussed, at least in first-century Rome (see *Quaestiones Conviviales* and *Quaestiones Romanae*; cf. Faas 1994: 96, who gives a few examples). They reflect an interesting mixture of the philosophical and the practical, with the latter focused somewhat on eating and especially

drinking. 'An elaborate formal ritual' wherein the tables were removed, the floor swept, and hands were washed demarcated the transition to the symposium (Smith 2003: 28). That the table should not be completely emptied is part of its symbolic value at the meal, at least according to Plutarch, who cites Lucius' grandmother's view 'that the table is sacred and that nothing sacred should be empty'. He goes on to note:

> [T]he table is in fact copied from the earth. For besides nourishing us, it is both round and stable, and by some it is properly given the name of 'hearth'. Just as we expect the earth always to have and produce something useful for us so we do not think a table should be seen, when it is abandoned, bare and carrying no load of luck. (*Mor*., *Quaest. Conv*. 704B [Minar, LCL]; cf. 702D)

Once the table was removed, the wine that would be used for the symposium itself was brought forth and mixed before the final course of the meal was served.

Although some rituals highlighted social connections and obligations among the diners, the gods were never very far away and were often acknowledged through specific rituals, particularly libations and prayers. This is summarized nicely in a clause from the regulations of an association of Zeus Hypsistos in a mid-first-century BCE papyrus text: 'You shall arrange one banquet a month in the sanctuary of Zeus for all the contributors, at which they should in a common banqueting hall pour libations, pray, and perform the other customary rites on behalf of the god and lord, the king' (*AGRW* 295 = *PLond* VII 2193, Philadelphia, Egypt, 69–58 BCE; translation by Kloppenborg). Since it was a sacrifice, the libation included invocation of the patron deity of the meal and perhaps other deities, first when the wine was ladled into the cup and again by the host or *symposiarch* ('banquet leader') as he poured a portion into the fire or onto the floor (Smith 2003, 30). At this point, the cup might be passed between the guests for each to take a sip and invoke the name of the deity with the formula 'for so-and-so' (Smith 2003: 30). Alternatively, a wine-pourer (*ministrator* or *pocillator*), often a child, could distribute individual cups to the diners, each of whom would hold it by one of the handles with two fingers and swirl the wine within the bowl, allowing some to splash over as the libation (Faas 1994: 94).

Even beyond the libation, deities could be invoked during the banquet; according to Diodorus Siculus, 'It is the custom, they say, when unmixed wine is served during a meal to greet it with the words, "to the Good Deity! [*agathou daimonos*]" but when the cup is passed around after the meal diluted with water, to cry out "To Zeus Savior! [*Dios Sōtēros*]" ' (4.3, cited in Smith 2003: 29). In some cases, three bowls of mixed wine and water could be prepared, the first cup from each dedicated to different deities: the Olympians, the Heroes, and Zeus Saviour (Smith 2003: 30). In many cases the libation would also be accompanied by a song or chant praising the gods or extolling some victory or triumph (Smith 2003: 30). A flautist might accompany the guests in singing these songs, which, according to Athenaeus' citation of other authors, might take on a number of forms: a chorus, individuals singing in turn, or restricted to the more accomplished singers in the group (*Deipn*. 694B). Athenaeus provides a few examples of songs sung,

some of which extol the virtues of gods and heroes, others of which are less religious (*Deipn*. 695; Faas 1994: 94).

Although the libation itself was serious business, it led to the development of a game called *kottabus* in which each player attempted to swirl their wine over the lip of the cup and land droplets in a centrally placed vessel while toasting a beloved. Success indicated good fortune for the lovers (Faas 1994: 95). Other games could be included as part of the banquet, such as checkers, backgammon, and dice, although gambling for money was a breach of etiquette (Faas 1994: 96). Other diversions could accompany dinner, such as acrobats and jugglers who 'displayed their arts with knives and flaming hoops. Comedians and dwarfs charmed the company' (Faas 1994: 97). Music was most often present, usually through flute or lyre, although singers could also be hired. Sometimes, however, cymbals, drums, and other percussion instruments were used. Such rhythmic music might be the backdrop to the performance of naked dancers (Faas 1994: 98). Far from being 'mere' entertainment, however, the inclusion of these pastimes contributes to what John D'Arms rightly demonstrates is 'the metaphor of the banquet-as-spectacle' (1999: 301). In imitation of such elite performances, non-elite banquets included elements of such entertainments, albeit on a less grandiose scale, but nevertheless ritualizing the theatricality within the meal setting.

Although the libations and accompanying prayers and songs play a small part in the meal itself, they are important ritual aspects that affirm the religious commitments of the participants as they are performed. As Bell (1997: 120) notes:

> In fasting and feasting rites, there may be little overt testimony to the presence of deities but a great deal of emphasis on the public display of religiocultural sentiments. One might say that in these rituals people are particularly concerned to express publicly—to themselves, each other, and sometimes outsiders—their commitment and adherence to basic religious values.

Through the libations, and the games that were linked to the cups used therein, participants in the communal meal affirm and reinscribe the group boundaries that provide them with cohesiveness while holding others at bay. The rituals are expressions of solidarity among participants—'People get together and enact what they hold in common' (Visser 1991: 30)—and what, or better, 'who', they exclude. The rituals are thus a form of 'social negotiation rather than simply a set of cosmically or inwardly directed gestures' (Taussig 2009: 57; cf. Stephenson 2015: 49).

Nevertheless, while the act of reclining together is an act of social differentiation, at the same time, communal meal rituals hint at the possibility of the elimination of differentiation (Smith 2003: 10; Taussig 2009: 72;). The rituals can both at once 'reinforce the status quo and enact transformation' (Grimes 2014: 312–17; cf. Handelman 1998: 48–9, 52–3). The similarity to elite practices express the normative socio-cultural relations but in doing so open up possibilities for 'their renegotiation and the formulation of alternatives' (Rao 2006: 148; cf. 156; Stephenson 2015: 53). As Rao points out, drawing on the work of Geertz, rituals are both 'models of' behaviour and 'models for' behaviour

(2006: 146). It is this latter aspect that opens up possibilities for transforming social hierarchies as non-elite men (and sometimes women) gathered for communal meals that replicated the (elite) social location that they could never occupy. For a brief time, their status becomes inverted and they can imagine themselves occupying higher social locations—doing what the elites do.

By modern standards, such temporary transformations of social location seem quite limited in their potential for challenging the inherent discrimination of the Roman status quo, since slaves still have limited inclusion and women are still mostly left on the margins. Yet within the Roman context the meal creates a liminal space and with it a sense of *communitas*, a place from which a person has the potential to emerge different. Such meals can be 'delimited occasions of "licensed reversal" or "ritual inversion" by which the status quo is taken apart, relativized, and often reconstituted in changed ways' (Bell 1997: 120).

Grignon designates meals in which such social boundaries are actually crossed as 'transgressive commensality' (2001: 30). At such times, a relationship of exchange is created between people who come from different social or economic status, albeit 'temporarily and symbolically' (Grignon 2001: 30). We noted earlier a mixed gender banqueting association (*GRA* II 99), to which other mixed gender examples might be added (e.g. *GRA* II 117 = *SIG*^{3} 985, Philadelphia, Lydia, I BCE; *AGRW* 330 = *IGUR* 160, Torre Nova, 160–170 CE). Other examples of somewhat socially transgressive communal meals can be found among groups that include masters and slaves dining together (e.g. *ARGW* 310, Lanuvium, 136 CE; *GRA* I 68 = *CIL* III 633, Philippi, II CE; *GRA* I 72 = *SEG* 46:800, Pydna, 250 CE) or the inclusion of children (Lupu 2005: 180). We find an example also in interactions between associations and civic magistrates or imperial authorities (e.g. see Kolb 1995).

Despite this potential, however, while communal meals are a time of forging group bonds and establishing group boundaries, they did not aim to overcome the inherent divisions that saturated Roman society. As we have seen, ritualized behaviour at the meal, including even the distribution of the food itself, demarcated the stratification of society (Donahue 2004: 83). As Grimes notes, drawing on Durkheim, 'rites conserve and consolidated social reality' (2000: 264). Thus, 'in the socially stratified society of ancient Rome, the meal became a highly effective means to emphasize such distinctions' (Donahue 2004: 91). Although participants might, for a brief snapshot of time, feel that they are socially bonded together within a larger social group through their shared rituals (Rao 2006: 144), these very same rituals are part of the strategies of power negotiation in which societal differences are merely replicated (Bell 1992: 211). Even rituals of status transformation, which by definition are 'transformative', serve to reinforce the overarching social system(s) of which they are a part. In the context of the Roman meal setting, change is not realized. Even if transgressing the social boundaries within the meal setting through the inclusion of persons of differing status, the social distinctions are both recognized and maintained (cf. Grignon 2001: 31). The ritualized Roman communal meal thus remains part and parcel of the wider social 'system of domination, oppression, and exploitation' (Stephenson 2015: 47) of the minority elites over and above

the majority poor and slaves, of the men over the women, and of the Emperor and his retinue over everyone else.

When banqueters emerge from the Roman meal setting, they return to the reality they left. The ritualized inversion was temporary and has not effected societal transformation. As Handelman (1998: 52) points out: 'Inversion maintains mode of discourse . . . The aspects of order that are inverted remain the mold for the inversion . . . The inverted order is not self-sustaining. It is an inauthentic version that revers to its normative counterpart, from which it derived.'

The communal meal rituals among the non-elites offer the potential for transformation through the inversion of societal expectations that only elites can participate in such lavish practices. Yet the very replication of the elite banqueting rituals, such as ranked reclining and larger portions for special guests, not to mention the reliance on elite and semi-elite patronage and the proclamation and recognition of such, subvert the possibility for transformation and thus Roman communal meal rituals at all levels mirror and reinforce social order to participants and observers alike (cf. Ascough 2012: 68–9).

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CHAPTER 13

PURIFICATION

THOMAS KAZEN

Introduction

Rituals of purification are found virtually everywhere in the ancient world. This chapter will discuss purification rites in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome, with special emphasis on purification in Second Temple Judaism, since early Christian rituals largely evolve from Jewish practices.

Conceptually, purification primarily suggests the removal of dirt, pollution, or contaminating matter. Contextually, purification at times partially overlaps with other concepts, such as sanctification and healing. Some purificatory rituals are self-administered, while others are performed by ritual specialists. Not only persons and objects, but also places, buildings, and in some instances foodstuff and drink can be purified. Since impurity is usually understood as an acquired state which could be entered and exited, purification rituals are repeatable. However, some exceptional impurities for which there are no purification rituals prescribed, are regarded as permanent, and can only be handled by removal or destruction.

Purification may be necessitated by anything that evokes divine displeasure or wrath, such as murder, incest, war, or lack of attention to and respect for the gods, including breaches of cultic prescriptions, or codes of conduct. But purification may also be necessary in a number of situations which do not involve any type of wilful transgression, but rather belong to the course of normal life, such as birth, death, marriage, and disease. In addition, purification is a natural preparation for situations of heightened religious experience, when people encounter divine powers, whether in the mysteries or during ordinary feasts, and when they visit sanctuaries to perform regular sacrifices. Purification thus becomes of utmost importance for maintaining emotional stability, human dignity, and social order.

Means and modes of purification vary a great deal. Purificants can be poured, sprinkled, daubed, rubbed, burned, eaten, or killed. Impurities can be removed, buried, sent away, or destroyed. Water is the most common purificant, and can be used in numerous

ways: immersion, ablution, sprinkling, laundering. Fire at times appears as a radical method for purification. Other purifiers are smoke and incense, salt, and various vegetable and animal products, including garlic, eggs, and animal carcasses. Some of these are mostly locally attested while others, like sacrifice and blood, appear universally. In some contexts, oil can be used, but more often for sanctification than for purification.

Impurity and Purification in the Ancient World

Concepts of Purity and Impurity

Ideas and practices of purification presume and correspond to specific ancient understandings of purity and impurity. Concepts of impurity include a diversity of conditions and behaviours, including besmirched items, repellent substances, bodily fluids, certain physical states and diseases, corpses and carcasses, contagion by contact, food avoidances, disapproved sexual relations, breaches against moral and cultural codes, and various spiritual threats. At the same time, this array of meanings does reveal certain common traits. Aesthetic and emotional aspects are present, as both human and divine beings are thought to enjoy that which is whole, clean, and radiant and to shun what is smelly, smeared, and smitten, especially when it threatens human life and order. An affective element is also detectable in the linguistic expressions, which all relate to human experience one way or another (Feder 2014).

In Egypt, *bwt* originally characterized a wide range of social, ethical, and cultic offences, but mainly came to designate various types of taboos. Purity (*wab*) basically meant the absence of pollution (*abw*) and could be achieved by ritual washings (Meeks 1979; Frandsen 2004).

In Mesopotamia, purity rather characterized a positive quality, a state of perfection. The Akkadian terms *ellu, ebbu*, and *namru* carry meanings of being clean, clear, or bright, in contrast to being dim, tainted, or sullied. Impurity can be expressed by negations of purity or by terms for soiled or muddy (*lu'û, dalḫu, waršu*), or dull (*ešû*) (van der Toorn 2004; Guichard and Marti 2013: 51–2).

Similarly, Hebrew *ṭāhôr*/*ṭohŏrâ*, like its Ugaritic cognate, can mean 'shining', or 'radiance', although it is mostly used for purity as absence of contagion. Impurity (*ṭāmē'*/*ṭumʾâ*) refers to pollution in the form of impure physical conditions, often in legal contexts, but can also be used in the sense of culpability and moral transgression. The underlying meaning is probably dirt. The Syriac cognate verb can mean to be 'soiled' or 'sticky', in a concrete sense. The corresponding Egyptian Arabic root means 'silt'. The later Arabic word *ṭamā* means 'be choked with mud'. *Tammay* is 'mud of the Nile' (André 1986: 330; Paschen 1970: 27). The Semitic etymology suggests an association with physical dirt, and to purify (*ṭihēr*) can thus be understood in its root meaning as cleansing

from dirt. Because of the conceptual overlap between purity and holiness, as well as between impurity and sin, *qiddēš* (sanctify) and *ḥiṭṭē'* ('de-sin') are sometimes also used to denote purification (van der Toorn 1985: 27–37; Feder 2014).

The Hittite word *papratar* often refers to pollution as a spiritual threat, through gossiping, curses, sorcery, and bloodguilt (Feder 2014). In Iranian religions, purity (Avestan *yaozhdāh*) represents order, in contrast to chaos, while pollution (*âhitica*; cf. *irimant*) is a dynamic concept, associated with a female deceiver demon (*drug nasu*). Hence purification takes on exorcistic traits, requiring priestly purifiers (Choksy 1989: 1–22; 2004).

In Greece, *miasma* similarly denotes a dynamic and dangerous kind of pollution, the neutralization of which requires cultic manipulation. The partially overlapping *agos* seems to be more particularly tied to the sacred. By contrast, *akatharsia* is the absence of purity and often refers to immoral behaviour. All of these terms, however, can designate an impurity caused by human behaviour regarded as objectionable to the gods, including bloodshed, sacrilege, and faulty ritual practice. To be pure (*katharos*) meant basically to be free of anything offending the gods, which included adherence to local (sanctuary) rules. An overlap with *hagnos*, similar to the overlap between Hebrew *ṭm'* and *qdš*, can be observed, although in hellenistic Greek *hagios* is usually employed for the latter meaning, and both *katharos* and *hagnos* came to be used for purity of character and moral behaviour. Purification could be achieved by sacrifice, water rites, and 'medicines' (*pharmakoi*, such as ritual expulsion of human scapegoats) (Parker 1983: 1–17; 2004; Blidstein 2017: 19–38).

Although there are those who claim that except for death, the Romans were 'relatively free of the sense that there exists a class of naturally occurring things that pollute in and of themselves' (Beck 2004: 509), such a view cannot be corroborated by evidence (Lennon 2014: 19–20). It is true that there is no Latin noun corresponding to the Greek *miasma* (Beck 2004; Lennon 2012: 43). It is also true that serious crime, such as bloodshed, was increasingly handled by the judicial system (Fantham 2012: 60; Lennon 2012: 54). Blood nevertheless remained a pollutant, together with sexual activity, especially of an impropriate kind, childbirth, and the corpse. Ordinary life events, laxity, and ritual negligence, caused divine anger and needed expiation, sometimes in the form of the purification of cities (Lennon 2012; 2014). And both Greek and Roman mystery cults required various purificatory rites in preparation for initiation (Blidstein 2017: 28–31).

Impurity, Sin, and Evil

The equation of impurity and sin, especially in earlier scholarship on Judaism, has been severely criticized for reflecting Christian or Western anti-Jewish and/or supercessionist bias (cf. Klawans 2000; 2006). The discussion frequently becomes heated and often is not only troubled by conflicting interests but also obscured by confused categories. It is true that a number of physical conditions or 'ritual' states, experienced as intimidating, threatening, and in particular as objectionable to other people and to the supernatural

powers, and thus identified as 'impure', are not necessarily to be understood as sinful, in the sense of incurring moral guilt. Purity language is nevertheless employed in moral discourse and the same or similar purification rituals are employed for a variety of purposes (Kazen 2011: 23–8).

According to the Israelite priestly system, *ḥaṭṭā't* and *'āšām* sacrifices are employed in order to 'atone' or effect removal (*kipper*), as part of the process of purification from childbirth impurity, skin disease, and genital discharges (Lev. 12–15). (The law for purification from corpse impurity in Num. 19 is somewhat later, and identifies the burning of the red heifer as a *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifice, without ascribing to it a *kipper* function.) The same sacrifices are, however, used to effect removal in cases of inadvertent sin (Lev. 4–5); the *ḥaṭṭā't* is also employed in the Day of Atonement rituals (Lev. 16) and the *'āšām* in certain cases of sexual sin (Lev. 19:20–2). Although it could be argued that the *kipper* function of these two sacrifices has more to do with negotiating the offence against the divinity caused by impurity and sin respectively, than with purification per se, this does not become overly clear even in the priestly system (Kazen 2011: 152–64).

A comparison with Greek evidence rather suggests a situation in which such distinctions are difficult to uphold (Parker 1983: 10). In ancient Greece, pollution (*miasma*) was understood to result from such diverse things as liminal states (childbirth, death), bloodshed, sex, sacrilege (including minor violations), and even disease (Parker 1983: 32–73, 74–103, 104–43, 144–90, 207–34). Related concepts and the same type of reasoning are used for pollution as offence against the gods, as a dynamic and demonic force, as resulting from indecency and lack of decorum, and as a consequence of murder. Similar considerations apply to Rome, where *polluere*, although not so frequently used, can refer to pollution by illicit sex, immoral action, sacrilege, and murder (Fantham 2012: 60–1), but also to the impurity caused by death (*funestus*). As for childbirth and licit sex, evidence is not so clear as in Greece, but abstinence is associated with being pure (*purus*) and newborn children are purified (*lustrare*) (Lennon 2014: 58–64). Public and communal cleansing of the whole city is described not only in exceptional situations, but as part of regularly recurring calendrical rites (Graf 2010: 422–3; Lennon 2012: 55–6).

In the East, too, offences against the gods and against fellow humans were often understood to be defiling in a sense close to the defilement of impurity caused by disease, by natural processes, and liminal experiences (Kazen 2011: 28–31). The Egyptian category *bwt* indicates a large admixture of moral, social, and cultic offences, including the breaking of purity rules. Purity is the absence of *bwt*. There is a conspicuous blend of impurities and 'sins'; two examples are the negative confessions, as in the 125th chapter of the *Book of the Dead*, and the so-called cult monographs, for example, *Papyrus Jumilhac* XII, 16–21 (Meyer 1999: 45–64; Frandsen 2004: 497–9 and 2007: 89). Even though sin and pollution were not identical concepts in ancient Mesopotamia, both could be envisaged as stains, and in need of purification (van der Toorn 2004: 499–501), and purification was at times achieved by magic and exorcism (Guichard and Marti 2013: 57–9). For some impurities only superficial purifications were necessary, as when diviners prepared themselves to question the gods. Other pollutions went deeper and required

elaborate rituals, whether resulting from conscious transgression, unconscious law-breaking, or even being subject to sorcery (Guichard and Marti 2013: 80–90).

The demonic character of impurity is perhaps most accentuated in Persian religion (Zoroastrianism), in which pollution is associated with the corpse demoness (*drug nasu*). Although most Zoroastrian texts are late, the *Vendidād* probably dates at least from the Achaemenid period (no later than 300 BCE; de Jong 1999: 304). Here the corpse is the paramount source of impurity, occasioning a much more elaborate purification rite (*barashnum*) than polluting body fluids (de Jong 1999: 308–19; 2013: 187–90). Corpse impurity takes on metaphysical proportions. Purification from it becomes part of a cosmic struggle between good and evil.

Motives for Purification

It is commonplace to state that purification is necessary in order to approach the sacred, sacrifice to the gods, and visit temple areas. While this is certainly true, it is not the whole truth. Studies of purity in early Judaism sometimes claim that except for extremists and sectarians, purity practices were restricted to, or at least heavily focused on, the Jerusalem temple. Impurities from menstruation, sex, or burial, would not have concerned anyone except in view of a temple visit. This is hardly tenable (Kazen 2016).

At first sight, however, such views seem to go well together with the focus on purity regarding the cult which we find in many studies of other ancient religions, too. From Egypt, we have door inscriptions warning priests and visitors about the food taboos and body purity required for entrance. Purity seems to be primarily a matter for priest and rulers and other members of the elite. Herodotus suggests reservations against contact with foreigners and claims that priests shaved their body daily, immersed twice daily and twice a night, and also observed certain food restrictions (Herodotus, *Hist*. 2.37, 41). As for ordinary people, the evidence is ambiguous. But the fact that visitors and workers in temples were required to observe special purity regulations does not by itself indicate that they were without purity rules under ordinary circumstances. Evidence that the scribal elite considered certain professions dirty suggests that a minimal level of purity was normally expected. Local purity rules for each district (*nome*) are quite common and include taboos on certain foods, certain sexual acts, and certain behaviours, which do not seem to be restricted to cultic officials, but apply to the population at large (Meyer 1999; Quack 2013).

When purity in ancient Greece is discussed, it is often done in view of the 'sacred laws' (Bendlin 2007; Günther 2013; Robertson 2013). We must, however, consider the fact that religion and everyday life were in no way separated, and temples and cult sites were everywhere present in the ancient world. The idea that purity would *only* be an issue in relation to the sacred and, therefore, would not be of much interest to the majority of people for most of their time, assumes anachronistically a society in which the sacred was much more limited and circumscribed than was actually the case in the ancient

world. True, sacred areas were delimited and purity was crucial in those contexts, which motivates purifications in view of temple visits. However, purifications relating to birth, death, sex, bodily fluids, and sometimes disease, or for that matter to the land, seem to have covered the broader scope of human civilization and society in general (cf. Parker 1983: 322–7). In this regard, the role of purity in everyday life in Zoroastrianism is conspicuous (Choksy 1989: 78–110).

A special feature of Second Temple Judaism is its lack of temples; even considering the very few existent diaspora examples, Jerusalem occupied a unique place. The priestly rules regarding purification rites were to a large extent shaped during the Persian period with Yehud as a limited vassal state gathered around the rebuilding of the temple and the reconstitution of a renewed cult. The political and religious situation explains some of the focus on purity for the sake of the sanctuary in the priestly laws, such as purification after childbirth (Lev. 12:4), the summary at the end of the discharge laws (Lev. 15:31), and the corpse impurity rules (Num. 19:13, 20). However, this does not restrict the demand for purity to the sacred sphere, which is not the focus of these rules. The rules for contact contagion assume any contact with skin-diseased persons to be avoided by all means, and the prescribed purifications are necessary for access to one's house and reintegration in society at large (Lev. 13–14). The details of the discharge rules are aimed at avoiding every contamination (Lev. 15). Both archaeology and textual evidence suggest extensive observance of purity rules and purification rituals, including frequent, perhaps daily, immersions in stepped pools (*miqwa'ot*) far from the temple as part of 'household religion'. No decrease in these practices can be shown until after the Bar Kochba revolt (Adler 2011; 2014; 2016; Miller 2015; Kazen 2016).

It should be noted that materials used in various purification rituals were usually taken outside of the city, buried in the wilderness, or thrown into the sea (Graf 2010: 422; Hutter 2013: 166–8; cf. HL 44b; Lev. 16:27). Also, both the Greek *pharmakos* and the Jewish scapegoat, as well as the live bird used for purifying the scale-diseased person ('leper'), were driven out from inhabited areas and sent into the wilderness (Lev. 14:2–7; 16:20–2; for Hittite and Babylonian parallels, see Wright 1987: 15–91). Building materials affected with *ṣāra'at* ('leprosy') were supposed to be deposited outside the city (Lev. 14:29–45). This suggests an understanding of impurity as something to keep away from human habitations in general, not just from sanctuary space. Although the role of everyday purity and frequent purifications for the general population might have differed between, for example, Egypt (cf. Quack 2013: 140–3) and Judaea, purifying rites in the ancient Mediterranean world were neither reserved for the elite, nor restricted to sacred precincts.

Contexts for Purification

It is often asserted that impurity is a function of the human condition. Human beings may be expected to purify themselves or to be purified in a number of situations

belonging to the general life cycle, such as menstruation, marriage, sex, childbirth, and death. While this is part of the truth, the conclusion that pollution concerns everything which is particularly human in contrast to the divine sphere does not follow. Even if such a distinction could be argued for Judaism, it fits poorly with some other religious systems, in which gods in fact can be born, give birth, and die, as well as engage in sexual activities (Lemos 2013: 274). People may be considered impure for other reasons than sex and death. And impurity also affects vessels, artefacts, foods, fabrics, buildings, cities, and lands. Divine images and temples nevertheless seem to be especially vulnerable to pollution from human sources. Impurity turns out to be part of human life—and so does purification.

Actual practices often have to be gathered from scattered passages and remarks in a wide variety of texts, together with some material evidence, such as paintings and reliefs, in which purificatory rituals occasionally figure. A coherent and systematic picture is difficult to find, except for Second Temple Judaism, for which we have priestly purity codes, and to some extent Zoroastrianism, based on the *Vendidād*. In the following, the most important types of impurity and purifications will be reviewed.

Body Fluids

Not all body fluids are commonly treated as impure. Faeces and saliva occur occasionally, but are not considered unclean in most traditions. It is genital discharge in particular—semen and vaginal blood—that are generally understood to pollute.

The impurity of vaginal blood in the ancient world is, however, an ambiguous issue. There is Egyptian evidence for purity concerns: the Egyptian word for menstruation (*ḥsmn*) is related to the term for purification, and certain demotic contracts (third century BCE) indicate that buildings could have special rooms where menstruating women could stay. Some evidence for menstrual separation in Egypt can be found even in Byzantine-era texts. Impurity from menstruation and miscarriage belong to the abominations prohibited for specific cities or districts in the so-called cult monographs. Moreover, absentee lists for workers from Deir-el-Medina indicate that men stayed home from work when their wives and daughters menstruated. Menstruation was definitely understood as something negative, but to what extent, and how it polluted except in temple contexts, are somewhat unclear (Frandsen 2007; Quack 2013: 142).

Mesopotamian evidence covers a long time period and, in addition, several different cultures. The Sumerian poem *Enki and Ninhursaĝa* describes the pure land of *Dilmun* as a place without destructions, without death, without disease, and perhaps, depending on the translation, without menstruation (Guichard and Marti 2013: 60–5). This piece of evidence is uncertain. However, a number of terms for which the exact range is uncertain, but referring to women bleeding from the womb for one reason or another, do occur in ancient Near Eastern texts. Although their interpretation is contested, some Akkadian texts and fragments can be taken to indicate the impurity of bleeding women, and even their isolation, or at least as prohibitions against contact or sex (van der Toorn

1994: 51–5; Philip 2006: 5–7). Childbirth seems to have incurred impurity, too, both according to Babylonian (Stol 2000: 205–6) and Hittite (Beckman 1983: 251–2) texts.

Greek and Roman evidence is similarly ambiguous. We have no clear evidence from the classical period that menstruation was regarded as polluting. Aristotle says a menstruant dims the mirror (*De Somniis* 459b–60a) and Roman writers, like Pliny, later add more details (*Hist. Nat*. 7.63–4; 28.70–82). Menstrual blood is clearly regarded as powerful and most likely seen as negative, but the question is whether and to what extent it was understood to pollute. Except for medical texts, there is little or no mention of menstruation in classical times, not even in comedy, which made Parker ask whether it perhaps was regarded too shameful to speak about (1983: 102). Roman writers are not as reticent, and menstruation is clearly viewed as polluting, although prohibitions relating to the sacred are missing (Lennon 2010; 2014: 81–9).

Express prohibitions against menstruants entering sacred precincts are few and late but do exist in the sacred laws, usually referring to temples of Eastern gods. They are required to wait for seven to nine days. The waiting time after childbirth varies between seven and forty days; a period of forty days is confirmed by the third-century CE Roman writer Censorius (*De die natali* 11.7; Blidstein 2017: 23). Birth pollution was sometimes considered extremely serious, as in the case of Delos, the sacred island of Apollo, where both burial and childbirth were banned in 426/5 BCE, after a Delphic oracle; women had to give birth on the adjacent Rheneia (Herodotus, *Hist*. 1.64; Thucydides 3.104; Günther 2013: 250).

Although its focus lies on corpse impurity, the Zoroastrian *Vendidād* reveals a clear stance on vaginal blood, and also touches on male discharges. All or most issues from the human body, whether sick or well, are considered to pollute, including blood and semen. This necessitates that menstruants withdraw and sleep alone. Parturiants must be isolated for forty days. Menstruants and women with irregular bleedings must purify by washing twice with *gomez* (cow's urine) and once with water (*Vend*. 16:1, 12). Textiles which have once been polluted by corpse impurity can after purification only be used by purifying dischargers during their waiting period (*Vend*. 7:10–19). Contamination by touch from male as well as female dischargers is assumed (*Vend*. 5:59; 7:19). Vessels used for bringing food to impure women must be made of metal (*Vend*. 16:6), since stone and metal vessels can be purified after contamination (*Vend*. 7:73–5). Even involuntary semen emission is punished (*Vend*. 8:26) and the death penalty applies to anyone who has sex with a bleeding menstruant (*Vend*. 16:17–18). Childbirth as such is not addressed by the *Vendidād*, but only stillbirth; in Zoroastrian practice, however, childbirth is always associated with impurity and purification. Purity has little to do with temple visits or sacrifice, but rather with the Zoroastrian view of the sacredness of the fire and the ground. There is no distinction between everyday matters and the sacred sphere.

The priestly rules about genital discharges which lay at the bottom of the practices of Second Temple Judaism may well have been shaped under influence of Persian religion (Kazen 2015). Lev. 15 is shaped symmetrically with rules regarding male and female discharges (natural and pathological) balancing each other (Ellens 2003; Hieke 2014: 526–47). The priestly authors have managed to create an at least superficially coherent system

from material of fairly disparate origins. Semen emission incurs impurity until evening. Menstrual impurity lasts for seven days, like the waiting period for pathological male and female dischargers after the cessation of their symptoms. The latter are required to bring sacrifices of removal on the eighth day. All are expected to bathe their bodies and probably launder their clothes, too, although this is not explicitly stated about the menstruant it is probably assumed (Wright 1987: 181–96; Milgrom 1991: 919; Kazen 2007). Consequently, sexual intercourse also incurs impurity until evening. The point of the rules is to avoid contact, which incurs impurity until evening.

Childbirth rules (Lev. 12) are short and have probably been added somewhat later; they assume the discharge rules. Pollution of the parturient lasts for a first stage of seven days and a second stage of thirty-three, in the case of a boy; for a girl, the numbers are doubled. The difference has puzzled many, but as we have seen, periods of approximately forty days are found elsewhere and differences in length, too. The purification period is concluded with a sacrifice and immersion is most probably assumed although not explicitly mentioned (Kazen 2007).

Disease

Disease in the ancient world was often seen as divine punishment and in contexts where divine disapproval was understood in terms of pollution, disease could be subject to purification. One example is the Hippocratic text, *On the Sacred Disease* (ca 400 BCE), which accuses purifiers of trying to purify epileptics just like any polluted person. This does not mean that any disease was understood as pollution and subject to purification. In addition to pathological discharges, skin diseases seem to have been regarded as particularly polluting, at least in the East. Often translated as 'leprosy' (but not referring to Hansen's disease), skin diseases both prevent access to temples and are subject to strict rules of isolation, quarantine, and demand purification after their healing.

One example from Egypt prohibits access to the temple of Esna (Quack 2013: 120). Babylonian evidence includes, for example, a Mari letter, a Šurpu incantation, and a Babylonian *kudurru* inscription (Milgrom 1991: 805, 818, 911). One such boundary stone inscription refers to the *išrubu* (skin disease) covering the whole person, who is driven out of the city and has to stay outside of the walls so that no one should approach him (Nougayrol 1948). Although the *Vendidād* does not mention it, Herodotus says that the Persians do not allow 'leprous' people to enter a town or to associate with others (*Hist*. 1.138).

This fits with the priestly laws in Leviticus and Numbers (Lev. 13–14; Num. 5:2–3), which place skin-diseased persons outside of settlements with the express purpose to prevent contact with others, which accords with what we know from some of the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as from Jewish practice according to first-century CE texts.

The priestly purification rites (Lev. 14:1–32) were elaborate, and were not aimed at healing the disease, but at keeping it away once the symptoms had abated. The formerly skin-diseased person who had recovered had to undergo a bird rite outside the settlement, then launder, shave, and wash, before being readmitted into the settlement.

However, before being allowed into their home, healed 'lepers' had to wait for seven days and then do another round of laundering, shaving, and washing. In addition to this there were three types of sacrifices on the eighth day, one of which included the daubing of blood from one of the sacrificial victims onto the outer extremities of the body (cf. the even more elaborate purification of various body parts in Zoroastrian rites; *Vendidād* 8:35–72; 9:15–26). All of this together effected purification and 'removal' (*kipper*).

Corpse Impurity

Purification from 'death impurity' or corpse contamination was a common idea in the ancient world. 'Everything that died a natural death is impure' (*sua morte extincta omnia funesta sunt*; Festus, *De Verborum Significatione* 161.1; Graf 2010: 421). In practice, however, Roman attitudes to death and pollution were more ambiguous and more pragmatic (Bodel 2000; Lindsay 2000).

As part of the already mentioned purification of Delos, graves were moved from the island. Such views were not global, however. In Egypt, with its particular views on death and the afterlife, tombs and corpses were certainly susceptible to pollution and could need purification, but they themselves did not pollute, even though mourning behaviour did (Quack 2013: 143–52). Neither Mesopotamian nor Hittite evidence suggests an understanding of the corpse as contagious (Feinstein 2014: 26–7). In Greece, tombs of heroes seem not to have been considered polluting, and could actually be housed within cities (Ekroth 2002). Generally, however, the Greeks regarded death as polluting, incurring a ten- to forty-day waiting period for the household or after contact with a corpse (Blidstein 2017: 22). In Athens, a container with water was placed outside the house of a deceased person in order for people to wash themselves (Euripides, *Alcestis* 98–100; Graf 2010: 422).

Zoroastrianism presents the most dynamic concept of corpse pollution. As soon as a person dies, the corpse is entered by the corpse demoness (*drug nasu*). Interestingly, the more holy a person has been, the more impure the corpse becomes. Its contagious power quickly has to be diminished with the *sag-did* rite, including the gaze of a dog. Burial includes exposure of the corpse to flesh-eating birds on a burial tower (*dakhma*), in order to protect both fire and ground. Corpse-bearers are highly polluted, are required to keep separate and eat from special vessels, and have to undergo a preliminary purification as soon as possible. Purification of polluted people requires washing in *gomez* and water, as well as the *barašnum* rite (Choksy 1989).

In Second Temple Judaism, corpse impurity and associated purification rites were subject to continuous development. From being a concern mainly for priests (Lev. 21:1–4), it became an issue for everyone (Num. 19). Pollution from contact with a corpse or presence within the same space rendered a seven-day impurity, and purification was effected both by immersion and sprinkling. Although regarded as the strongest form of impurity, its contaminating force was mitigated through the employment of an extra first-day ablution, not attested in the biblical laws but in later sources. Contact with a

corpse-impure person resulted in defilement until evening (Kazen 2010). Stepped pools for purification adjacent to burial grounds, which have recently been excavated, attest to the attention given to death pollution in practical life and the urgent need to diminish its force immediately (Adler 2008; 2009).

Bloodshed

Homicide (war or legal execution sometimes excepted) was generally thought to cause impurity, but exactly how that pollution is envisaged differs. According to Mesopotamian texts, bloodshed pollutes and even gods had to purify after killing (Attridge 2004: 73). But it has been claimed that blood was only thought to pollute individuals, not societies, or territories. Only the murderer would thus be affected (Barmash 2005: 94–115). Others question this restriction when other than legal texts are considered (Dietrich 2010: 191–6).

In any case, there is a difference compared to the Israelite legislation regarding undetected murder and the pollution of bloodshed (Lev. 21:1–9). The law assumes that premeditated murder should be punished and not included under the provisions made by cities of refuge for unintended homicide (Deut. 19:1–13; Num. 35:10–34). Unavenged intentional bloodshed pollutes (*ḥnp*) and defiles (*ṭm'*) the land (*'ereṣ*; Num. 35:33, 34) or people (*'am*; Deut. 21:8), and if the pollution cannot be removed (*kpr*) by the death of the murderer (Num. 35:33), it must be done by breaking the neck of a heifer by throwing her down an uninhabited ravine.

If looked at in isolation, it is questionable whether this counts as a purification rite. Although it is barely integrated into the priestly system, and formally neither a sacrifice, nor a purification, the rite does remove (*kpr*) the bloodguilt (*dām*) (Deut. 21:8), which in later texts is spoken of in terms of pollution and impurity (Num. 35:33, 34). Such an understanding seems quite reasonable and hardly anomalous when compared to Greek and Roman evidence. In Greece, the pollution of murder, its disastrous effects on the land and on the people, and its purification by an array of rites, including exile and sacrifices, was a well-known topos in myth, tragedy, and history (Parker 1983: 104–43). Here we also find the concept of purifying blood with blood, for example, the blood of a piglet, which is then washed off. This is also one of the contexts in which the use of *pharmaka* as purificant was in force (Burkert 1985: 80–1; Parker 2004: 507–8; Graf 2010: 421–2). In Rome, pollution and purification from bloodshed were still an issue, but less of a threat to society at large, as the Roman legal system turned this more into a question of individual rights (Lennon 2014: 92–100).

Objects, Buildings, and Grounds

The purification of cult images, cultic instruments and vessels, altars, and temples, as well as both sacred and secular precincts, is widely attested in ancient Mediterranean

and Near Eastern texts. Since everything surrounding the cult required as high a state of purity as possible, the purification of cultic attire does not necessarily indicate previous defilement, as in Egyptian rituals of consecration and 'decoration' (Quack 2013: 116–18). Other temple purification rites, like the Israelite Day of Atonement ritual, specifically aimed to remove pollutions that had accumulated over time (Lev. 16). Greek purifications of temples and cities were likewise elaborate arrangements. Fumigation was used to purify objects and spaces. In Rome, fields were purified with the *circumambulatio* rite, and in both Greece and Rome the annual cycle was introduced by a purification period—in Rome, this took place during February. Some of these rituals contained regular *pharmakos* rites and the cleansing of cult images in the sea (Graf 2010: 422–3). Although pollution of the land is an issue in the Israelite priestly *Holiness Code* (Lev. 18:24–30; 19:22–6), there are no purification rituals for that purpose (except in the above case of pollution by blood guilt), but rather instances of rhetoric by means of evocative metaphor.

Explanations of Impurity and Purification

The broad range for which purity language is used has been puzzling to many scholars. In the Israelite priestly texts, purification rituals are only prescribed for those 'technical' types of bodily contagion which are included in the purity laws (Lev. [11]12–15; Num. 19). These are often called 'ritual', while various behaviours understood to cause impurity, for which no purificatory rituals are prescribed, have been designated as 'moral'. Within such a framework, food taboos find themselves sitting on the fence. There is a lively discussion about to what extent 'moral' impurities are to be understood metaphorically or literally.

Some of the distinctions based on these priestly texts are difficult to claim, based on what we know of purification practices elsewhere in the Mediterranean and the Ancient Near East. Even within the priestly system, sacrifices of 'removal' function similarly, whether in contexts of impurity, or in relation to other types of moral or cultic offence, although purificatory water rites are only prescribed for impurities caused by corpses, carcasses, and bodily contagion. In many neighbouring cultures, there is little difference in the removal of various kinds of pollution and offence, which makes clear and fast distinctions difficult.

Language and Metaphor

Taking semantic considerations into account, we may suggest that most conceptions of impurity and most usages of purificatory language are in fact metaphorical, unless the

removal or washing away of literal substances is envisaged. This use of language is profitably explained by conceptual metaphor theory, which sees metaphors as cross-domain mappings that carry notions from one cognitive domain to another and provide the other domain with new impetus and meaning (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). A primary notion of material dirt (impurity, pollution) is mapped onto domains of disgusting creatures, unsavoury human beings, or objectionable behaviour, thus creating secondary notions of pollution. These are all to some degree metaphorical, whether or not they are integrated into a system which involves their removal by concrete purifying rituals.

A more nuanced understanding can be gained by applying conceptual blending theory: domains or mental spaces (input spaces) which have certain elements in common (generic space) can easily be fused into a blended space in which certain other elements from the input spaces are combined into new conceptual frameworks. The effect is not restricted to language only, but new blends will influence both thought and behaviour (Coulson and Oakley 2000; Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 17–57).

Such explanations assume that beneath the surface, conceptions of pollution and impurity depend on basic notions of revulsion and offence, which are variously extended, elaborated, and culturally construed (Kazen 2011: 33–6, 71–94; 2014). They also explain why many cultures lack distinct categories for different types of impurity and use similar purification rites for very diverse offences.

Psycho-biological and Socio-cultural Explanations

To suggest that disgust or revulsion lies at the very bottom of purity concerns is not the same as claiming this to explain every purification ritual. Core disgust evolved as an adaptive trait to protect living organisms against danger. As a survival mechanism, aversion has an ultimate biological base, but most or all levels of disgust of which we are aware are more or less shaped by cultural evolution (Kazen 2014). Simply put, pollution and its purification in various human societies have sometimes travelled far from their innate origins. In spite of this, some degree of ground-level aversion is usually present in all contexts in which pollution is handled by various purifying and removal rites, however culturally construed.

Evolutionary and psycho-biological explanations do not claim to explain the details of such cultural constructions, but focus mainly on the necessary prerequisites for purity conceptions to evolve. Historical and socio-cultural explanations are needed to understand how and why general aversions developed into more specific conceptions of impurity in particular contexts. For example, the general use of water rites for purification is quite intuitive, while the particular evolution of various types of ablution, immersion, and sprinkling, and the precise combination of these for various purposes, require historical and contextual explanations.

Historical and socio-cultural factors are also important for understanding how avoidance behaviours and purificatory strategies are shaped and systematized into fixed practices, customs, and at times, elaborate purity codes. Depending on the context,

such customs and codes are integrated and interact with dominating social, cultural, economic, and hierarchical patterns. To that extent we may speak of their function, remembering that the meaning has little to do with intention or purpose, but is more in the Durkheimian sense of correspondence, or perhaps effect. Such effects will naturally correlate with all other values and practices that operate in the social context in question. Purity practices may therefore function to reinforce certain behaviours, structures, and ideologies in a society without this being their *meaning*. This is true even when individuals or groups of people consciously employ or exploit purity practices for such purposes, or ascribe such meaning to them (Kazen 2017).

Functionalist and Symbolic Interpretations

Unfortunately, function is often understood in quite a different manner. In the past, it has been quite popular to explain concepts of pollution and practices of purification as reflections of social structures, or theological teachings, at times to the point of allegory (cf. Douglas 1978; 2002). Functionalist or structuralist understandings of impurity associate impurity with classification and boundaries of the social body, and sometimes read purity codes as cosmological ciphers.

This priority of mind and theory over behaviour and ritual is problematic; it is not only unlikely on cognitive grounds but more often than not reveals acontextual and ahistorical traits. In addition, it turns the interpretation of purity concerns and purification rites into an arbitrary and speculative enterprise, which at times has little foothold in the text (Watts 2007: 15–27; Lemos 2009; 2013). This is true also of theological versions of functionalist-structuralist interpretations.

Closely related to these perspectives but with ancient roots are symbolic and allegorical understandings, the difference perhaps being that allegory does not need to make any claims about a ritual's intended meaning, while symbolism tries to explicate it. Neither needs bother much about historical levels, and in the end both often turn out to be as speculative as functionalist-structuralist readings, depending more on the interpreter's leanings than on textual or contextual clues. Purificatory rites, just like sacrificial rituals, especially those found in the Bible, are particularly vulnerable to symbolic overinterpretation, when interpreters struggle to find relevant meaning in texts and rites from the past.

Purification as Ritual Activity

The study of ritual has flourished during the latest decades, and the depreciative 'Protestant' attitude of previous times is all but gone. In its place, and replacing older ideas of 'primitive' religion, a number of new theories have appeared. Some of these may shed light on purificatory rites.

Frequency, Agency, and Efficacy

According to the ritual frequency hypothesis (McCauley and Lawson 2002; Whitehouse 2002), rituals typically tend towards one of two attractor positions: low frequency rituals usually go together with high sensory stimulation, while high frequency rituals are normally low in sensory pageantry and cause less excitement. To some degree this is common sense and perhaps even slightly tautological, since that which is repeated regularly effects habituation and thus cannot excite or enthuse in the long run. Even the most spectacular scenery becomes commonplace to the person who constantly lives with it. To a certain extent, then, what counts as sensory pageantry is contextual and subjective.

The basic observation of the ritual frequency hypothesis nevertheless makes sense. Rituals repeated daily or even several times a day are usually much less elaborate and spectacular than those that occur once in a lifetime. For example, the infrequent purification of a Greek city, through the expulsion (probably not killing!) of a *pharmakos* or *katharma* (Parker 1983: 257–80; Hughes 1991: 139–65), or the purification of homicide with the blood of piglets or dogs (LIMC 7, Orestes 48; Plutarch, *Roman Questions* 280b–c) were more spectacular events than the simple washing with water from a container placed outside the house of a deceased person (Euripides, *Alcestis* 98–100; Graf 2010: 422). Similarly, in ancient Mesopotamia, where *šurpu* and *namburbû* rituals, aimed at particular and occasional evils, seem to evoke a 'medium level' of sensory excitement (cf. Guichard and Marti 2013). In Zoroastrian religion, the simple *pādyāb ritual*, sprinkling cow's urine (*gōmēz*) over affected body parts, could be repeated several times a day, while the nine-night *barašnūm* for direct corpse contamination was so elaborate that it eventually came to be performed vicariously (Choksy 1989: 23–52; de Jong 1999). In Second Temple Judaism, the conglomerate of rites ascribed for the annual Day of Atonement (Lev. 16) involve much more sensory pageantry than the daily handwashing before meals that came to be increasingly practised towards the end of the Second Temple Period.

According to Lawson and McCauley's theory of ritual form, rituals, just like all other actions, involve agents, instruments, and 'patients'. Within this 'action representation system', divine (superhuman) agents, or gods, can be particularly involved at any level, either through the ritual agent, or through the ritual instrument or patient. In the first case, the ritual is called a 'special agent ritual' and in the second and third cases, it is called a 'special instrument' or 'special patient ritual'. Whether divine agency is transmitted and manifested first and foremost through the person performing a particular ritual, through the means of the ritual, or through the instrument or recipient of the ritual, is not always self-evident, but Lawson and McCauley suggest that it is possible to discern where the supernatural agent enters the ritual structure initially and with as few enabling rituals as possible. Be that as it may, the point is that special agent rituals are supposed to go together with high sensory pageantry and low frequency, while special instrument and patient rituals are thought to be less exciting but often repeated. When highly exciting special agent rituals are too frequently repeated, there is sensory

overload. In contrast, the loss of sensory pageantry in rarely repeated special agent rituals creates a deflated system which becomes boring and encourages splinter groups.

This multi-theory has been criticized, both for being overly complicated and for not fitting Judaism very well. In fact, neither Second Temple Judaism nor rabbinic Judaism seem to make use of special agent rituals (Ketola 2007; Biró 2013)! Sacrifices are by definition understood to be special patient rituals (they are repeated), although their sensory pageantry, especially during feasts when thousands of animals were slaughtered, must have been enormous. Nor is circumcision, in spite of being a once-in-the-lifetime event, a special agent ritual, since, at least in theory, anyone is in fact allowed to perform the rite. In that regard, it is similar to Christian baptism which does not require a priest to become valid, but only water and, in due time, the trinitarian formula.

Returning to purification rites, some fit the theories discussed above fairly well. The just-mentioned nine-night *barašnūm* rite requires a 'professional purifier' to perform it, whether or not it was undertaken vicariously. It could be classified as a special agent ritual, relatively infrequent, and with high sensory impact. Similar considerations might apply to the Greek purification of cities, like that of Athens by the legendary Epimenides. Professional purifiers (*kathartai*) seem to have found a traditional place in Greek society (Borgeaud 1999; Ronen 1999). In the already mentioned *On the Sacred Disease*, however, purifiers are grouped together with charlatans and quacks (*agyrtai kai alazones*) (*Morb. Sacr*. I.3–4). Describing their misguided methods, the author accuses them of treating epileptics just like they would deal with any polluted person: 'for they purify those having the disease with blood and the like, as if they had some pollution, or curse, or were bewitched by a human being, or had done some profane act' (*kathairousi gar tous echomenous tēi nousōi haimati te kai alloisi toioutois hōsper miasma ti echontas, ē alastoras, ē pepharmakeumenous hypo anthrōpōn, ē ti ergon anosion eirgasmenous; Morb. Sacr*. IV.36–40). We see here an interesting list of categories supposed to be in need of blood purification: those variously polluted (*miasma ti echontas*), those under a curse or haunted by blood guilt (*alastoras*), those bewitched, or possibly, scapegoated, by other human beings (*pepharmakeumenous*/ *pepharmagmenous*), and those who had done something sacrilegious (*ti ergon anosion eirgasmenous*). Whether the efficacy of such rites depended on the purifiers' special status must, however, be questioned; these are repeatable rites that might be better classified as special instrument rituals, depending on blood as purificant. The category of special instrument ritual probably fits the *barašnūm* better, too, in view of the emphasis placed on the exact performance of every detail in order for the rite to be valid. Whether the supernatural agent primarily works through the purifier or through the rites or through the purificants used in the rites is sometimes a moot question, and there is a risk of classifying rituals so as to confirm the theory of ritual form.

Jewish purification rituals present special challenges, as they often do not need a priest. Ablutions and immersions are usually self-administered: the agent and the patient are identical. The closest entry for the supernatural agent in such cases is the water and most water purifications are probably best understood as special instrument rituals, not only in Judaism, but also in other religious systems in the ancient world

(Uro 2016: 86). Similarly, purificatory practices such as laundering, shaving, and the removal of polluted materials are best described as special instrument rituals. Even the concomitant sacrifices, which normally would be understood as special patient rituals, could be reconsidered as instrument rituals, because of the uncertainty of the recipient of the sacrifices and their intended effects. The sacrifices of removal (*ḥaṭṭā't* and *'āšām*) are indeed brought before Yahweh (e.g. Lev. 4:3; 5:15) and like the main sacrifices of Lev. 1–3 also designated as sacrificial gifts (*qorbān*), but some ambiguity remains even within the priestly sacrificial system as to how the 'removal' is envisaged—hence the uncertainty regarding their classification as special patient or special instrument rituals.

One could in fact argue that most or all purifying rituals are special instrument rituals, since their purpose is to remove pollution from the patient with the help of concrete and specific purificants. This focus on method and means is a trait shared with magic. With or without the involvement of specific divine beings, supernatural power is ascribed to the rites performed and the instruments used. From such a point of view, the transformation of purificatory immersion in water into baptism by John and by the early Jesus movement must be regarded as a mutation of sorts; there is now a ritual agent and the rite is understood as a more or less singular event. This makes baptism susceptible to being understood as a special agent ritual, although Paul argues against the significance of the baptismal agent (1 Cor. 1:10–17). According to the gospel tradition, baptism is closely associated with the gift of the spirit and could from that perspective be thought of as a special patient ritual—only that this does not fit the theory. In any case, the efficacy of purifying rites in general does not seem to depend on the purifying agent, but on the purificant, or instrument.

Purification as Commitment Signalling

Another avenue for studying ancient purification rites is the theory of commitment or costly signalling, which explains personally disadvantageous behaviour and elaborate rituals by the long-term advantage of confidence and goodwill one receives from the larger community by performing them. The focus here is not on the efficacy of the rituals in themselves, but on evolutionary and psychological explanations for their adherence. Faithful observance proves that one is not a cheater or free rider, but a trustworthy person, prepared to invest in common concerns (Irons 2001; Bulbulia 2010). Complex purification rituals may be seen as hard-to-fake signals.

By strict adherence to purity codes and frequent purifications, one demonstrates faithfulness to vital group values and confirms group identity. Conversely, a lax attitude and lack of observance signal unreliability and a lack of loyalty. Such considerations override arguments from common sense which have frequently been presented against historical adherence to complicated rules. Well-known examples are the isolation or quarantine of menstruants in Second Temple Judaism, and the increasing observance of hand washing before ordinary (profane) meals. Claims that even priests, some of whom were poor and unable to afford the cost of strict adherence, might wink

at the rules (Sanders 1990: 135, 233) carry little weight in light of the power of commitment signalling. The already-mentioned Zoroastrian nine-night *barašnūm* rite is costly, and going down the steps into a roofed, dark, and sometimes muddy immersion pool is probably unpleasant, but people did such things out of commitment.

Several purity systems in the ancient world evolved from disparate practices into organized systems, with increasingly elaborate detail and new rites. Purificatory practices were well suited to express commitment and foster group cohesion and cooperation. The formation of the two most coherent systems we know of, Jewish and Zoroastrian purifying practices, seem to go together with the rise of cultural and/or national identity. Commitment signalling provides at least a partial explanation for this phenomenon (Uro 2016: 128–53).

Purification and Emotional Impact

The role of emotions in rituals is debated (cf. Michaels and Wulf 2011) and range from anxiety relief to satiety feelings. It is a highly controversial issue whether ritual should be understood as an evolutionary by-product or as an adaptation for social interaction and communication (cf. Boyer and Liénard 2006, with open peer commentary). Purification can be cheap or costly, simple or strenuous, high or low arousal, but in one way or another, purification rites appeal to the senses: sight, hearing, smell, and touch, some also to taste. The immediate meanings of rites are those experienced by the people who take part in them, regardless of what official and theological interpretations are attached. Since human experience is embodied, the emotional impact of a ritual will play a decisive role and in the case of purification rites, this relates to the means and modes that are used.

The most common means of purification is water, whether by washing, sprinkling, or immersing. Water can be experienced as refreshing and life-giving, but also as threatening, and water rites are bound to have emotional impact. First, to wash items, images, or clothes as part of purifying rites comes close to, and at times even coincides with, the literal cleaning from dirt which ritual purification is mapped upon. Emotionally, such rites will thus effect a sense of real change in status and quality. Similar considerations would apply to other rites which involve 'manual cleaning', such as wiping, scraping, or decorating. There is a decisively tactile aspect to such purifications.

Second, to submit one's own person to water rites is more dramatic than the washing of inanimate objects. This applies in particular to immersion, which is an emotionally salient rite, experienced in and through the entire body. The embodied experience of contact with water supports a feeling of change and removal which compensates for the fact that the pollution from which the person is purified is often neither visible nor material. The movement in space, down the steps into a basin, into the water, crouching or bending, inscribes an embodied memory which reinforces the sense of validity and efficacy. This feeling is further enhanced in rites which involve the smearing of mud or blood onto the purifying person, thus materializing impurity, before washing it off.

Purification rites thus generate an embodied and extended knowledge which is experiential rather than theoretical (Uro 2016: 154–77).

Third, water rites can elicit collective emotions which enhance solidarity, a sense of belonging, and group identity. While sprinkling is performed by a ritual agent and can be applied to many people simultaneously, immersion is usually self-administered (except for the innovation of John and the subsequent Jesus movement) and individual. This does not, however, necessarily result in an individualistic attitude. It has often been mistakenly assumed that for rituals to evoke collective emotions, those involved must share collective experiences and a common identity. What is needed, however, is shared appraisals of (representational and motivational) contents in relation to individual needs, goals, and values, which will elicit similar emotions. The very character of the rite can trigger similar appraisals, especially within the context of pre-existing groups (von Scheve 2011).

Other types of purification are emotional, too. The use of blood is dramatic; although animal blood, it reminds of human vulnerability and mortality. As a condition for life, it represents power. The sight and feel of blood can evoke fear. Similar considerations apply to the use of animal carcasses for purifying sacred buildings. While incense has a pleasant side, smoke and fire are dramatic and ambiguous, with threatening characteristics. Scapegoat and *pharmakon* rituals evoke feelings of exposure and victimization, reinforcing group loyalty and belonging. Many of these rituals have traits that typically instil a sense of awe, which is still a little-studied emotion, but seems to lie at the roots of human religiosity. Awe has been shown to lessen the need for cognitive closure and increase prosocial tendencies and cooperation (Keltner and Haidt 2003; Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman 2007; Piff et al. 2015). Purification rites can thus be understood to be functional from both an evolutionary and a psychological perspective.

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CHAPTER 14

PRAYER

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Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to survey of the forms, content, functions, and settings of Greek and Roman prayer using evidence from the middle of the first millennium BCE through the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods. While ancient prayer exhibited changes over the centuries, Greek and Roman cults were rather conservative institutions, with the result that many fundamental features of ancient prayer underwent relatively few changes throughout antiquity (Versnel 1981: 3). The Homeric epics, which contain about seventy prayers in dactylic hexameter, provide the earliest literary evidence for Greek prayer; these prayers functioned as models for prayer throughout antiquity. While it is somewhat problematic to treat Greek and Roman prayer together, they do share many common features as well as differences. Most of the evidence for prayer in antiquity is preserved in fictional literary contexts (like the Homeric epics and Attic drama) or in ancient historiography—in which prayers, like speeches, were composed for inclusion in particular literary settings. Given the formulaic character of most ancient prayers, however, our guiding assumption will be that literary prayers were consciously formulated with the intention of imitating the conventions of actual prayer in order to achieve narratival verisimilitude.

In the following, after discussing several important methodological issues, I will turn to a discussion of prayer as text, including the problem of defining prayer, two modern presuppositions that make it problematic to understand ancient prayer, and prayer in the context of the Greek and Roman social and cultural expectation of reciprocity. I will organize the rest of the chapter on Graeco and Roman prayer focusing on the two categories, namely, *Text* and *Performance*.

Methodological Issues

Defining Greek and Roman Prayer

Since this chapter will attempt to provide an overview of the role, function, and settings of prayer in the religion of the Greeks and to a much lesser extent of the Romans, it is natural to begin with a definition of prayer, which may be generally defined as human verbal communication with the divine. Objections have been raised to describing prayer as 'communication', since communication involves a *two-way* exchange of information, whereas prayer involves only a *one-way* transmission of information (Alles 2000: 483). Greek prayer is an exception, however, since the use of divination in the Greek religious practice involves both addressing a request in prayer to a deity often with the expectation of receiving a reply, either in human language, e.g. the oracle at Delphi, or in the expectation of receiving a revelatory dream, e.g. incubation oracles, such as those found in the sanctuaries of Asclepius, or the expectation of receiving a coded response at lot oracles, e.g. the sanctuary of Zeus in Dodona (Aune 1983: 24–7).

Prayer, like all human institutions and practices, is culture-bound and must be understood in light of the particular systems of religious beliefs and practices of which it is part (Phillips 1965: 37). There are striking differences between the role that prayer plays in modern monotheistic religious traditions (such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam) compared with its role in ancient Graeco-Roman polytheistic religious traditions. There are several patterns reflecting the notion of reciprocity found in the *pars epica* or argument section of Greek prayer (see below), which are absent from prayers in the Old Testament and New Testament, as well as from prayers used in modern Christian denominations. One of the more common prayer patterns is the *do-ut-des* pattern (I give that you might give), i.e. the worshipper offers a sacrifice to the deity in the expectation that the deity will reciprocate by giving the worshipper what he or she has asked from the deity. The quasi-contractual nature of these prayers has led some scholars to categorize them as magical. This, however, is an attempt to make ancient prayer fit the ideology of modern prayer. According to D. Z. Phillips (1965: 112–30), a philosopher of religion, prayer may be rooted in either devotion or superstition; genuine Christian prayer is characterized by the supplicant's readiness to accept the will of God, whereas prayer that is intended to influence God is superstition or magic. Phillips' views, based on modern philosophical monotheism, are very different from those of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The difference is reflected in the fact that the reciprocity formulas used in ancient prayer and sacrifice are virtually identical with the protocol associated with Greek custom of *xenia*, 'guest-friendship', or 'hospitality' (Pulleyn 1997: 28–9). An example of an appeal based on *xenia* is found in Telemachus' request of Nestor in *Odyssey* 4.328–31: 'I beseech you, if ever [*ei pote*] my father, noble Odysseus, promised you any word or deed and fulfilled it in the land of the Trojans,

where you Achaeans suffered woes, be mindful of it now, I pray you, and tell me the very truth' (Murray and Dimock, LCL).

Each of the major types of modern monotheistic religions consists of numerous subtypes, with each subtype typically considering itself the only true and legitimate form of faith. Monotheistic religions conceptualize God as omnipotent and omnipresent and as both distant and sovereign; believers approach him as sinners who expect everything from him and think it inappropriate to assert their own rights. For the ancient Greeks, on the other hand, the gods are conceived anthropomorphically and are assumed to associate with people as helpers and allies. While it is true that philosophical monotheism developed among ancient Greek thinkers beginning with Xenophanes of Colophon (*c.*570–478 BCE) and was frequently critical of popular religion, it was never made part of the cult of the Greek city-states.

Two Problematic Assumptions

Students of the ancient world are regularly confronted by striking socio-cultural differences between the ancient and modern worlds. There are two major modern ideological presuppositions that have served as barriers to an historical understanding of Greek and Roman prayer. First, there is a deeply rooted modern Western tendency to contrast *personal prayer*, often regarded as free and spontaneous, emotional and authentic (i.e. people pouring out their hearts to God), with ritual prayer, pejoratively regarded as mechanical, artificial, and without true religious feeling or devotion. This dichotomous way of looking at prayer is reflected in the work of the American psychologist William James, who distinguished between institutional religion and personal religion, focusing exclusively on the second in his classical work on religious experience (James 1902: 28–9). James incorrectly assumed that religious experience was individual and could not be mediated by the rituals of institutional religion (Parker 2011: 224–5). This contrast was also the focus of the monograph on prayer by Friedrich Heiler, who considered prayer as the central phenomenon of religion (1932: xiii–xvi), which he understood in terms of the theory of cultural evolution current among anthropologists and classicists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (e.g. E. B. Tylor and Jane E. Harrison). Heiler describes the primitive prayers of prehistoric people as 'a free creation of the moment, an independent, creative act on the part of the worshipper' (1932: 9). These spontaneous prayers were petrified into prayer texts that are formulaic, repetitive, and static in character, to the extent that no worshipper would dare alter the wording to the slightest degree (1932: 66). Hence, the form, not the content, secures a response from the deity (Heiler 1932: 71). Contrary to both James and Heiler, evidence from more recent studies of prayer in comparative religion indicates a strong correlation among, and interdependence of, personal, ritual, and liturgical prayers in terms of language, form, style, and physical postures and gestures (Gill 2005: 7369).

Second, there are many striking differences between the modern Western conception of religion and the religious practices of the Greeks and Romans. First of all, the concept of religion is a Western invention only about 250 years old (Smith 1962; Dubuisson 2003). Neither the Greeks nor the Romans had a term designating 'religion' in the modern sense of a system of beliefs, rituals, and behaviours separable from other socio-cultural institutions. Greeks referred to their own religious practices in a variety of ways including *therapeia tōn theōn*, service to the gods, i.e. religious correctness and proper respect for the gods, accomplished when making requests of them by praying correctly, by giving them gifts, and by sacrificing to them correctly (Mikalson 2010: 9–10, 30–40). Unlike people in the modern West, Greeks and Romans did not have a 'religious' identity that could be separated from their identity as Greeks and Romans.

Prayer and Reciprocity

One of the central social expectations of Greek society from its earliest beginnings, which persisted in somewhat altered form into the Roman era, was *reciprocity*—that is, the assumption that every gift or service rendered placed a moral obligation (i.e. an informal contract) on the recipient to respond with an equivalent counter-gift or counter-service (Seaford 1994; Parker 1998). Reciprocity is a widespread social phenomenon, particularly evident in traditional societies, that finds expression in political, social, economic, legal, and religious spheres (Mauss 1954: 12–15). Ancient Greeks and Romans assumed that any gift or action should be met by an equal gift or reaction, whether in human interaction or in the interaction between worshippers and their gods (see Ullucci, Chapter 16 in this volume).

One of the more important terms related to the semantic field of reciprocity is *charis* (grace, favour). When a worshipper gives something to a god through sacrifice, he or she gives *charis* in the sense that the offering is intended to be pleasing. At the same time, however, the worshipper instils a feeling of gratitude on the part of the god, which is also called *charis* (MacLachlan 1993: 6–10; Pulleyn 1997: 4). According to Plato: 'The priests, according to law and custom, know how to give the gods, by means of sacrifices, the gifts that please them from us and by prayers to ask for us the gain of good things from them' (*Statesman* 290c [Fowler, LCL]; cf. Euripides, *Hel.* 753–4). That is, the sacrificial gift is thought to incur an obligation on the part of the god to reciprocate, and prayer constitutes the laundry list of the benefits the worshippers hope to receive.

Another pervasive term used in contexts of reciprocity is *timē* (honour). The gods, like people who enjoy high status and occupy positions of authority, expected *timē* from their social inferiors. The verbs *chairō* (to favour) and *timeō* (to honour) occur together in the epitome prefacing Euripides' *Hippolytus* 7–8, where Aphrodite observes: 'For among the gods there is this trait: they enjoy receiving honor [*timōmenoi chairousin*] from mortals' (Kovacs, LCL).

Prayer as Text

Sources of Prayer

The primary sources available for the study of Greek and Roman prayer are found in a variety of ancient sources, including literature, inscriptions, papyri, where many prayer texts are preserved, as well as vase paintings and votive reliefs, which depict the postures and gestures of prayer (Chapot and Laurel 2001). Much of the evidence for prayer in Graeco-Roman antiquity is preserved in both poetic and prose literary works and for that reason is varied in value. Since the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were composed in dactylic hexameter, the language of the prayers found in these works was very different from the typical prose prayers used in cultic settings. In the prayers found in another hexameter poem of much later date, Vergil's *Aeneid* (written between 29 and 19 BCE), the kinds of technical formulae which normally characterized Latin prose prayer are completely absent (Hickson 1993: 141). On the other hand, the prayers in the Latin prose history of Rome by Titus Livius (*c.*59 BCE to 17 CE), unconstrained by poetic metre, do contain the formulaic liturgy of the Roman cult (Hickson 1993: 144–8). Since the prayers and speeches composed by ancient authors for inclusion in their works were never intended to be taken as verbatim reports of actual speeches and prayers, the problem of the reliability of the evidence is a central issue. Since it appears reasonably likely that ancient authors intended the prayers they composed to conform to the cultural expectations of their readers, we may assume that the *structure* and general *content* of such prayers conform to Greek and Roman practice, while the *language* of prayer in literary sources remains a problematic issue (Hickson-Hahn 1997: 151–2).

Types of Prayer

Petitionary Prayer

The most common category of prayer in both Greek and Roman religion was the petition or supplication, i.e. a specific request for a benefit for oneself or for others from a divinity. What did the ancients ask the gods for? Virtually everything: good health and recovery from illness for the worshipper's spouse and children; for good crops; for the acquisition of their own horse or donkey, that the horse or donkey of his rivals might break their legs; for good fortune, honour, wealth, successful pregnancies; for a good voyage, escape from various kinds of dangers, etc. (Versnel 1981: 8–9). Here are instructions for formulating a petitionary prayer in the oldest surviving work in Latin prose, written around 160 BCE:

> Make a prayer with wine to Janus and Jupiter, and say: 'Father Mars, I pray and beseech thee that thou be gracious and merciful to me, my house, and my household;

> to which intent I have bidden this *suovetaurilia* [a pig, a sheep, and a bull] to be led around my land, my ground, my farm; that thou keep away, ward off, and remove sickness, seen and unseen, barrenness and destruction, ruin and unseasonable influence; and that thou permit my harvests, my grain, my vineyards, and my plantations to flourish and to come to good issue, preserve in health my shepherds and my flocks, and give good health and strength to me, my house, and my household.' (Cato, *Agr*. 251 [Hooper and Ash, LCL])

Since both Greek and Roman petitionary prayers of petition focus on the worshipper requesting health, wealth, and happiness, the importance of the 'I' in such prayers (often the first word in such prayers) has been referred to as *Gebetsegoismus* (the egocentric character of prayer), though this was not perceived negatively in ancient culture (Versnel 1981: 17–21).

Vows and Votive Offerings

Votive offerings (Greek: *euchē*; Latin: *votum*) are gifts dedicated by the worshipper after a vow had been fulfilled (Van Straten 1981; Linders and Nordquist 1987). There is a great deal of epigraphical evidence for votive offerings (Rouse 1902). Every dedication set up in fulfilment of a vow functions as a public acknowledgement that the prayer accompanying the vow has been fulfilled (Parker 2011: 3). For the well-off, such offerings might include the sacrifice of a domestic animal or the promise of a statue, altar, or temple, while gifts from the less affluent often included objects fashioned by the worshipper out of terracotta, bronze, stone, or wood, frequently representing parts of the human body as tangible indications of which part of the body was healed in answer to prayer (Van Straten 1981: 105–43). Votive offerings were typically displayed in temples, which often became packed with such gifts (Strabo 8.374; Pausanias 2.11.6; 3.26.1; Burkert 1985: 184), taking on the appearance of a large pawnshop.

A vow is an agreement that, should the deity grant a particular benefit, the worshipper promises to give a specific gift to the god as an expression of gratitude, typically using the *do-ut-des* reciprocity pattern (I give that you might give). There were also other patterns of obligation, such as *da-quia-dedisti*, 'give because you have given', and *da-quia-dedi*, 'give because I have given' (Pulleyn 1997: 17). In an accompaniment to a libation, Odysseus vows that when he returns to Ithaca he will sacrifice a heifer to the dead and a black ram to Teiresias (*Odyssey* 11. 29–33). A frequently used vow formula is *anth' hōn*, 'in exchange for which', often found on votive offerings indicating the fulfilment of earlier vows (Festugière 1976), as in this votive offering found in *Greek Anthology* 6.99:

> Philoxenides the worthy goat herd dedicated you, the Pan he carved from a barkless beech trunk, after sacrificing an old he-goat and making your holy altar drunk with the first milk of a she-goat. In reward for which [*anth' hōn*] the goats in his fold shall all bear twins in the womb and escape the sharp tooth of the wolf. (Paton, LCL)

The following is a votive epigram written to accompany the dedication of a statue to Aphrodite (*Greek Anthology* 6.209):

> Bithynian Cythere dedicated [*anethēkato*] me to thee, Cypris [Aphrodite], according to her vow [*euxamenē*], the marble image of thy form. But do thou, as is thy wont, give her a great gift in return for this little one; she asks no more than that her husband may be of one heart and soul with her. (Paton, LCL)

The written dedication served to reenact the original dedication when a later onlooker read the text aloud (Depew 1997: 239). In an epigram from Callimachus, the votive tablet serves as a reminder to Asclepius that Akeson has already satisfied his obligations to the god (Van Straten 1981: 71): 'Know that you have received the debt, Asklepios, which Akeson owed you because of his prayer for his wife Meodike, were you to forget it and claim it a second time, the votive tablet will serve as evidence' (*Greek Anthology* 6.147 [Paton, LCL]).

Curses

Both prayer and curse have an overlapping Greek and Latin vocabulary, suggesting that the ancients did not typically separate one from the other (Aeschylus, *Cho*. 142–8). The verbs *araomai, euchomai, kateuchomai*, and *epeuchomai*, depending on the context, can all be translated as either 'to pray' or 'to curse', just as the nouns *ara, epeuchē, euchē*, and *kateugma* can be understood as either prayer or curse, depending on the context. Similarly, the Latin term *prex* (pl. *preces*) can be rendered either prayer or curse. For Greeks and Romans, a curse was a specialized form of prayer, fitting the basic general definition of prayer as human verbal communication with the divine. While prayer generally centred on requests for personal well-being, curses are malevolent prayers whose intention is to inflict harm on an antagonist. Despite this overlapping vocabulary, there are many texts in which Greeks distinguished between the praying and cursing. Plutarch (*Quaest. Rom*. 275a) related the story of a priestess in Athens whom the people urged to curse Alcibiades; she refused, declaring that she was a priestess of prayer, not of cursing [*euchēs ou kataras*] (Watson 1991: 4, n. 26). Curses are often, but not always, motivated by the assumption that the curser has justice (*dikē*) on his or her side and that the gods are responsible for executing just curses: 'the gods accomplished his curses [*eparas*]' (Homer, *Il*. 9.456 [Murray and Wyatt, LCL]). Curses are often resorted to when people have no other effective means of redressing injustice (Watson 1991: 38–42).

While curses can be addressed to a deity or can mention a deity who will fulfil the curse (particularly in *defixiones* or curse tablets), often no deity is mentioned. In general, Greeks regarded curses as a legitimate form of prayer and referred to Zeus as Zeus *Araios*, 'Zeus who is invoked in curses' (Sophocles, *Phil*. 1183) and Sophocles elsewhere uses the phrase *theōn ara*, 'the curse from the gods' (*Trach*. 1239). A specific example of invoking Zeus in a conditional curse occurs in *Inscriptiones Graecae* 12.1.737: 'I, Idomeneos, erected this tomb, so that glory should be mine and may Zeus destroy utterly whoever damages it' (Watson 1991: 8). An example of a conditional curse in

which no deity is explicitly mentioned is found in *Inscriptiones Graecae*, 3.1423.7–13: 'If anyone deface this tomb or deprive it of its paving or remove anything else … let him not be able to walk upon the land or sail upon the sea, but he shall be rooted out with all his race …' (Watson 1991: 8). There were several motivations for cursing, two of the most common of which were revenge and conditional curses which are activated only when a particular condition has been fulfilled, such as tomb violation (cf. Gal. 1:8–9; 1 Cor. 16:22).

A distinct category of written curses are the curse tablets or *defixiones tabellae* (Greek: *katadesmoi*, binding [curses]), the object of which was to bind an enemy to the curser's will. Typically motivated by hate, greed, or jealousy, these curses were normally inscribed on a lead sheet that was rolled or folded and pierced with a nail before being placed in a grave, spring, or well or in temples of chthonic (earth) deities. More than 1,500 curse tablets from the fifth century BCE to the fifth century CE have thus far been discovered, about 1,000 in Greek and 500 in Latin (Jordan 1985). Unlike votive offerings, which were typically displayed in temples, curses written on lead sheets were intended only for the deity addressed, who was assumed to be able to read as well as hear. The following is a translation of a text written on a lead tablet dating to the first half of the fourth century BCE:

> Gods. Good Fortune. I bind and will not release Antikles, the son of Antiphanes and Antiphanes, the son of Patrokles and Philokles and Kleochares and Philokles and Smikronides and Timanthes and Timanthes I bind all of these before Hermes—the underworldly, the treacherous, the restrainer, the roguish; and I will not release (them). (Gager 1999: 200–1)

Oaths

In Greek, the noun *horkos* (oath) the verb *omnumi* (to swear) are the two most common terms used for oaths, while the primary Latin term for oath is *sacramentum,* which rendered the one who swears an oath *sacer*, i.e. 'given to the gods' in a negative sense should he or she violate the oath. The simplest form of Greek oath consists of the verb *omnumi* with the accusative of the deity by whom one swears, e.g. *omnumi semnēn Artemin, Dios korēn*, 'I swear [by] awesome Artemis, daughter of Zeus' (Euripides, *Hipp*. 713 [Kovacs, LCL]). The basic function of an oath is to affirm the truth of the speaker's word by swearing by a god often specifying the punishment that would be triggered if the oath was false. In an oath, the swearer does three things: (1) the swearer makes a declaration about the past or future; (2) the swearer specifies, explicitly or implicitly, a superhuman power or powers who act as witnesses to the declaration and guarantee its truth; and (3) the swearer calls down a conditional curse on him or herself, if the assertion is false or the promise is violated (Sommerstein 2014: 1–2). These elements are all found in Euripides' *Medea* 745–55 in a kind of catechism in which Medea instructs Aegeus, king of Athens, in how to swear the oath that she wants from him:

[AEGEUS]: Name the gods I must swear by.
[MEDEA]: Swear [*homnu*] by the plain of Earth, by Helios, my grandfather and by the whole race of gods altogether.
[AEGEUS]: To do what or refrain from what? You must say.
[MEDEA]: That you yourself will never banish me from your land, and that, if any of my enemies ask to take me, you will not willingly give me up as long as you live.
[AEGEUS]: I swear by Earth, by the holy light of Helios, and by all the gods that I will do as I have heard from your lips.
[MEDEA]: That is good. But what punishment do you call down on yourself if you do not abide by your oath [*horkos*]?
[AEGEUS]: The punishment that befalls mortals who are godless. (Kovacs, LCL)

An oath is almost always accompanied by an animal sacrifice and a libation (e.g. *Il*. 3.103–7, 268–313). Zeus as the highest and strongest deity is called Zeus *horkios* (invoked by oath). While almost any god could be invoked in an oath, often a triad of gods, representing the sky, earth, and sea (i.e. Zeus, Gaia, and Poseidon). In oaths, Romans tended to call upon Jupiter and 'all the gods'.

Thanksgiving

While it is true that prayers of thanksgiving or gratitude per se are relatively rare in Greek prayer, the older view that the Greeks did not give thanks to their gods has been convincingly refuted (Versnel 1981: 42–62; Bremer 1998: 127–37). One of the major ways in which Greek expressed thanksgiving to the gods for what they had done or were expected to do was by the dedication of votive offerings, often inscribed with eloquent texts, thousands of which have survived (see above). Further, Greeks tended to express what we would categorize as thanksgiving by praising the gods in hymns celebrating their presence, power, and gifts to humankind (cf. Quincey 1966: 157). The singing of paeans was done at times when worshippers recognized that a god had saved them from illness, danger, or imminent death, or at sacred moments of the year in which they recalled and celebrated the benefits of the gods (Bremer 1998: 137).

Hymns as Sung Prayers

Prayers which were sung to the gods in various cultic contexts were more formal and elaborate than ordinary prayers (see Weimer, Chapter 15 in this volume). Plato refers to one class of songs consisting of 'prayers to the gods [*euchai pros theous*] called hymns [*hymnoi*]' (*Leg*. 3.700b). Hymns or paeans (songs or lyric poems expressing triumph or thanksgiving) were often sung during processions to temples, while another type, called a *parabōmion*, was sung at or around an altar (Bremmer 1981: 197). Paeans, thought to have an apotropaic effect, were sung when a Greek military force approached an enemy in battle (Aeschylus, *Pers*. 388–94). In Athens, dithyrambs were ancient Greek hymns sung in honour of Dionysos at annual festivals such as the Dionysia. Despite the fact that hundreds of hymns were composed and sung in honour of various deities in

Greek city-states, they have almost all perished. One surviving exception is the paean to Hygieia, perhaps from the late fifth century BCE (Bremmer 1981: 210–11):

> Hygieia, most august of the blessed gods—may I dwell with you for the rest of my life, and may you always willingly remain with me! For if any pleasure can be got from wealth, children, royal power (which human beings regard as almost like a god), or the longings we pursue using Aphrodite's hidden nets, or if the gods have revealed any other pleasure or respite from their labors to human beings, all of these flourish with you, blessed Hygieia, and shine in the Graces' conversation. No one is happy when you are absent. And after embracing us warmly … (Athenaeus 15.702B [Olson, LCL])

Oracular Inquiries

The oracle questions directed to a god have similarities to a prayer of supplication or petition, particularly those written by individuals rather than those written by representatives of various city-states (Versnel 1981: 7–8). Here is an example of an oracular inquiry made to Zeus at Dodona in which the inquiry is indirectly asking for good health: 'Thrasyboulos, by sacrificing and appeasing which god, will he become healthier as to his eyes?' (Parke 1967: 267). A narrative description of an inquiry reflecting the uncertainties of polytheism is found in Xenophon where we read:

> Xenophon went and asked Apollo to what one of the gods he should sacrifice and pray in order best and most successfully to perform the journey which he had in mind and, after meeting with good fortune, to return home in safety; and Apollo in his response told him to what gods he must sacrifice. (*Anab*. 3.1.6–7 [Brownson, LCL])

Magical versus Religious Prayer

Fritz Graf, who has written extensively on ancient magic, assumed a distinction between religious and magical prayer and attempted to clarify their similarities and differences in a 1991 essay on magic and religious ritual (Graf 1991). As a basis for comparison, Graf examined several prayers in the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (*PGM* IV.2785–79; VIII.1–26; VII.756–94; XVIIb; VII.668–85; V.392–423; Greek texts: Preisendanz 1973–1974; English translations: Betz 1992). When the magical papyri first began to be published in the late nineteenth century, the existing dichotomy between magic and religion, which regarded magic as coercive and religion as supplicative, made it easy to assume a dichotomy between magical prayer and religious prayer (Aune 2007). For Greeks, the magician not only uttered spells, but also prayed to the gods (e.g. Plato, *Leg*. 10.909b; Graf 1991: 188–9). Graf makes several points in his comparison between magical and religious prayer: (1) Five prayers in the Greek magical papyri are introduced with the Greek term *euchē*, a common Greek term for prayer and also exhibit the three-part structure characteristic of many Greek prayers (see below). (2) Both magical and religious prayer may

be prefaced by long invocations conflating scores of divinities. (3) Like conventional prayers, magical prayers are typically linked to sacrifice, e.g. 'For doing good, offer storax, myrrh, sage, frankincense, a fruit pit. But for doing harm, offer magical material of a dog and a dappled goat (or in a similar way a virgin untimely dead)' (*PGM* IV.2874). These first three observations, Graf argues, indicate that with regard to general structure, content, and context, there is no difference between magical and religious prayer. (4) A distinctive feature of magical prayer is the use of *voces magicae* (magical words), which, while they have no counterpart in religious prayers, are not essentially an irreligious phenomenon. (5) With regard to the element of coercion, Graf observes that 'coercion is not omnipresent in the spells and prayers in a manner that would justify taking it as a—or the—*differentia specifica* of magic from religion' (1991: 194). (6) The magical practitioners' view of the divine, as a hierarchical structure with a supreme god presiding over a host of lesser deities, is a common conception of the divine world reflected in conventional Greek prayer.

What, then, is the difference between magical and religious prayer? For Graf, the main difference lies not in the prayers themselves, but in the social setting of magical and religious sacrificial ritual connected with prayer. In the most widespread form of Olympian Greek sacrifice, the killing of the sacrificial animal, this includes community involvement, since the meat from the sacrificial animal is shared by the sacrificing group as a sacral meal. In magical ritual, on the other hand, the solitary private rituals of the magician isolate him from others. Graf concludes:

> Thus, the main distinction of magic lies in the ritual, not in the prayers and not so much in the forms of the ritual—they are shared between magic and religion—as in the function. The rituals of the magician put him in opposition to ordinary, 'religious' ritual and isolate him from his fellow man. The distinction, then, lies rather in social than in psychological factors. (1991: 196)

There are two major weaknesses in Graf's arguments: (1) the nineteenth-century categorization of particular ritual texts as magical by including them in the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* does not automatically mean that that categorization is valid; and (2) Graf's dichotomy between the social versus the private contexts of ritual as the primary way of distinguishing magical from religion prayer ignores the fact that Greek religion has private and domestic forms of expression. Plato reflects this reality in arguing that it should be illegal to have shrines of the gods in private homes; people should only sacrifice at public shrines:

> Shrines of the gods no one must possess in a private house; and if anyone is proved to possess and worship at any shrine other than the public shrines—be the possessor man or woman,—and if he is guilty of no serious act of impiety, he that notices the fact shall inform the Law-wardens, and they shall give orders for the private shrines to be removed to the public temples, and if the owner disobeys the order, they shall punish him until he removes them. (*Leg.* 10.910b–c [Bury, LCL])

The Structure of Prayer

Carl Ausfeld formally analysed Greek prayers in terms of three structural features, each of which may consist of several structural elements: (1) *invocatio* (invocation); (2) *pars epica* (narrative or argument); and (3) *preces* (pl. of *prex*), 'prayer', the actual petition (1903: 505–36). In the imprecatory prayer of the priest (*arētēr*) Chryses in Homer's *Iliad* 1.37–42 all three parts are evident:

> [INVOCATION:] Hear me, you of the silver bow, who have under your protection Chryse and sacred Cilla, and who rule mightily over Tenedos, Smintheus,
> [ARGUMENT:] If ever [*ei pote*] I roofed over a pleasing shrine for you, or if ever [*ei pote*] I burned to you fat thigh pieces of bulls or goats,
> [REQUEST:] fulfill for me this wish: let the Danaans pay for my tears by your arrows.
>
> (Murray and Wyatt, LCL)

While many Greek prayers exhibit this tripartite structure, there are also many that do not (e.g. Euripides, *El*. 803–10). Each of the three parts of the Greek prayer proposed by Ausfelt will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

The Invocation

The invocation could consist of several elements, including an appeal that the deity be present and listen to the prayer as well as the inclusion of the name, surname, epithets, and descriptive predicates of the god or goddess addressed. Sometimes, to be on the safe side, a catch-all formula was included, such as 'with whatever names and patronymics you are most pleased to be called' (Plato, *Crat*. 400d–e [Fowler, LCL]). Like the heralds at public assemblies, worshippers typically begin prayers with an appeal to the god or gods addressed to listen. This occurs with some frequency in many of the earliest surviving Greek prayers found in the *Iliad* 1.37 (quoted above) and 10.278: *kluthi meu*, 'hear me' (see also 5.115), or *kekluthi nun kai emeio*, 'hear me now also', formulated to accompany the prayer immediately preceding (*Il*. 10.284). The same phenomenon appears in Latin prayers, as in Livy 1.32.10, where the imperatives *audi* and *audite* are used: 'Hear [*audi*], O Jupiter, and you Janus Quirinus, and all you heavenly gods, and you, gods of earth and of the lower world, hear [*audite*] me' (Foster, LCL).

In Greek religion, the gods were frequently requested to 'come' since they were not considered omnipresent, but understood as existing in specific places and therefore had to come in order to be present to hear the supplicant (Versnel 1981: 29–30). These invocations were customarily expressed using imperative forms of the many Greek verbs meaning to come: *deuro* (an adverb used as an imperative), *elthe* (Sappho, frag. 1.5), *herpe, hēke, mole* (*Orphic Hymns* 1.9). Such invocations were used to dedicate new images and temples of the gods and for securing their presence at sacrifices, oracular consultations, prayers, and in private rituals. Zeus is the exception. There is no evidence from prayer in public liturgies that Zeus is invited to come; he sees and acts from where he is.

The invocation of a god or gods by name and epithet is a regular feature of prayer in the ancient world, since in the polytheistic systems of both Greek and Roman religion, it was necessary to determine which deity or deities the worshipper wished to influence through invoking the appropriate names and epithets (Varro in Augustine, *Civ*. 4.22; Horace, *Carm*. 1.2.25–6). In Greek prayers from Homer on, formulas are present which are intended to ensure that the god addressed would not be offended by an incorrect invocation (*Od*. 5.445: 'Hear, Lord, whoever you are [*hotis esti*]'; Aeschylus, *Ag*. 160–1: 'Zeus, whoever he may be [*hostis pot' estin*], if it pleases him to be so called'; see Norden 1956: 143–7). In Plato, *Crat*. 400d–e, a distinction is made between the names which the gods use of themselves, unknown to humans, and the customary names which humans use in prayers since the true names are unknown.

The Romans were as rigorous and exacting in their formulation of prayers to the god as they were in the writing of legal documents. Pliny reflects this scrupulosity (*Nat*. 28.10–11):

> Moreover, there is one form of words for getting favorable omens, another for averting evil, and yet another for commendations. We see also that our chief magistrates have adopted fixed formulas for their prayers; that to prevent a word's being omitted or out of place, a reader dictates before the prayer from a script. (Jones, LCL)

In addressing the gods in prayer, the Romans used technical formulas, such as *sive deus, sive dea*, or *si deus si dea*, 'whether a god or goddess', much more frequently than the Greeks. See Livy 7.26.4: 'Then he [Marcus Valerius] prayed that whatever god or goddess [*si divus, si diva*] had sent him the auspicious bird, would willingly and kindly aid him' (Rackham, LCL; see also Livy 8.26.4; Aulus Gellius *Noct. att*. 2.28.3). A similar formula is 'Father Dis, Veiovis, Manes, or by whatever other name is right to call you [*sive quo alio nomine te appellari volueris*]' (Macrobius *Sat*. 3.9.10 [Kaster, LCL]; cf. Vergil *Aen*. 2.351; Alvar 1985).

The formulas *si divus, si diva* or *si deus, si dea*, were used in the ritual of *evocatio*, which preceded a Roman attack on a foreign city. The tutelary deity of a city was thought to have the power to grant or remove protection from the city and for that reason that deity's divine name was kept secret from all but those priests who had a need to know and use it (Hickson 1993: 41–3). When Scipio Aemilianus besieged Carthage in 146 BCE, he could only invoke the unknown name of the deity of the city by means of the paraphrase: '*si deus, si dea est cui populua civitasque Carthaginiensis est in tutela*', 'Whether a god or goddess who is the tutelary deity of the people and city of Carthage' (Macrobius, *Sat*. 3.9.7 [Kaster, LCL]; cf. Hickson-Hahn 1997).

The surnames or epithets of the gods occur in both cultic and literary contexts and serve to identify their domains and functions (Burkert 1985: 92–5). Some epithets were place names, e.g. Aphrodite *Cupris* (of Cyprus); Hera *Argeia* (of Argos), Athena *Polias* (of the city), others were cult names, e.g. Athena *Pallas*, Apollo *Phoibos*, or patronyms, e.g. Zeus *Kronioon* (son of Kronos) or functions, e.g. Zeus *Panhellenios* (of all Greeks),

Apollo *Apotropaios* (averter of evil), Hera *Gamelios* (patroness of marriage), and some whose meaning is no longer known, e.g. Hermes *Eriounios*.

The Pars Epica

The *pars epica* is the argument or narrative in which the supplicant explains why the worshipper is calling on this particular god or goddess for help, and why he or she can count on the god's assistance. A regular part of the structure of ancient prayer was a section detailing reasons given why a deity should respond favourably to the request, and it is here that the concept of *charis* (grace or favour) is ubiquitous. In the narrative or argument section of the prayer of Diomedes in *Il.* 5.115–20, Diomedes reminds Athena of what she has done for his father in the past and asks that she help him similarly in the present battle.

> [INVOCATION:] Hear me, child of Zeus who bears the aegis, Atrytone!
> [NARRATION:] If ever [*ei pote*] with kindly thought you stood by my father's side in the fury of battle, so now again show your love to me, Athene.
> [REQUEST:] Grant that I may slay this man, and that he come within the cast of my spear, the man who has struck me unawares, and boasts over me, and declares that not for long shall I look on the bright light of the sun.
>
> (Murray and Wyatt, LCL)

A combination of reasons is used in the following prayer of Diomedes to the goddess Athena where his acknowledgement of her aid in the past to his father Tydeus is supplemented by his vow to offer a sacrifice in the future (*Il.* 10.283–94):

> [INVOCATION:] Atrytone, daughter of great Zeus.
> [ARGUMENT:] Come with me now as you went with my father, brilliant Tydeus, into Thebes, when he went with a message before the Achaians, and left the bronze-armored Achaians beside Asopus while he carried a word of friendship to the Kadmeians in that place; but on his way he was minded to grim deeds with your aid, divine goddess, since you stood in goodwill beside him.
> [REQUEST:] So now, again, be willing to stand by me, and watch over me,
> [ARGUMENT:] and I in turn will dedicate you a heifer, broad-browed, one year old, and unbroken, that no man ever led yoked. I will drench her horns in gold and offer her to you.
>
> (Murray and Wyatt, LCL)

The Preces

The third part of the request, the *preces*, is the actual prayer or request, typically consisted of requests for the protection of the community against enemies and for the fertility of people, animals, and crops. An example is found in *Il.* 24.308–13, in a prayer in which the *pars epica* or argument is missing:

> [INVOCATION:] Father Zeus, who rules from Ida, most glorious, most great,

> [REQUEST:] grant that I may come to Achilles' hut as one to be welcomed and pitied; and send a bird of omen, the swift messenger that to yourself is dearest of birds and is mightiest in strength; let him appear on my right hand, so that, noting the sign with my own eyes, I may have trust in it, and go to the ships of the Danaans of swift steeds. (Murray and Wyatt, LCL)

In this prayer, which follows the pouring out of a libation of wine, Priam makes a twofold request of Zeus. After first asking Zeus to ensure that he will be welcomed by Achilles, he then asks for an omen to indicate that his prayer will be answered.

The Language of Prayer

The most widely used Greek words for prayer are the noun *euchē*, and the verb *euchesthai*, which, depending on context, can mean either 'loud cry', 'prayer', 'vow', or 'curse'. The verb *euchomai* originally meant 'to assert solemnly' and was not restricted exclusively to cultic contexts (Pulleyn 1997: 59–63). Many of the most common words for prayer in Greek religion are based on the *euch-* root, e.g. *euchē, euchetaomai, euchōlē, euchomai, euchos, proseuchē, proseuchomai*, all of which mean 'to speak to God', 'to make requests of God', 'to ask God for', 'pray', 'prayer' (Adkins 1969: 20–33; Muellner 1976; Louw and Nida 1988, 1.409).

Important Latin terms for prayer include *prex*, pl. *preces* (prayer, curse), *precatio* (prayer, supplication), and *precarius* (suppliant). There are also several types of prayer: (1) *carmen*, pl. *carmina* (a verbal utterance sung for ritualistic purposes, i.e. a chant, hymn, spell, or charm; *carmen malum* is a possibly harmful magic spell); (2) *votum* ('a vow made to a god'); (3) *devotio* (an extreme form of *votum* in which a Roman general vowed to sacrifice his own life in battle along with the enemy to chthonic deities in exchange for a victory; generally curse, execration); (4) *dedicatio* (dedication, i.e. the ceremonial opening of a public building), *consecratio* (consecration), and *evocatio* (the calling forth or summoning away of a deity; in a military setting it was the urging of a tutelary deity to abandon a city); and (5) *suplicatio* (thanksgiving after help is received); *supplicationes* were days of public prayer when the people of Rome joined in processions to religious sites around the city praying for divine aid in times of crisis.

Prayer as Performance

Prayer and Sacrifice

Sacrifice was always accompanied by prayer (*Il.* 1.446–56; 2.410–31), but not every prayer was accompanied by sacrifice (e.g. the imprecatory prayer of Theano to Athena *Il.* 6.305–10). Prayer and sacrifice were so frequently connected that the phrase *litai kai*

thusiai (prayers and sacrifices) had become a fixed formula (Pindar, *Olymp*. 6.78). In Euripides *Electra* 803–7, Aigisthus prays after offering barley on the altar, just before he slaughters a bull. Similarly, sacrifices and votive offerings are often mentioned together, in part because both involve gifts to the gods. In other situations, a votive offering (Greek: *anathema*; Latin: *votum*), i.e. a permanent gift to a deity, was made as a result of a successful prayer (Rouse 1902). Prayers pronounced aloud by officiating priests were used to ensure the efficacy or success of a variety of important functions or events, such as sacrifices, battles, or public orations (Aristophanes, *Thesm*. 295–305).

Since sacrifice was so common throughout the Mediterranean world, few authors felt the need to describe sacrificial ritual. In fact, there is a single description of Roman sacrifice, written by the Greek author Dionysius of Halicarnassus in order to demonstrate that Greek and Roman sacrifice were very similar (*Ant. rom*. 7.72. 15–18; Gradel 2002: 17). This account specifically mentions the prayer offered between the purification ritual and the actual sacrifice: 'For after washing their hands they purified the victims with clear water and sprinkled corn on their heads, after which they prayed and then gave orders to their assistants to sacrifice them' (Gradel 2002: 17).

The *precatio* was the formal addressing of the deity or deities in a ritual. The word is related by etymology to *prex*, 'prayer' (pl. *preces*), and usually translated as if synonymous. According to Pliny (*Nat*. 28.11), slaughtering a sacrificial animal is ineffective without *precatio*, the recitation of the prayer formula.

Silent Prayer

Prayers in the ancient world were usually spoken aloud in both public and private settings. The Greeks understood the gods anthropomorphically with eyes and ears and assumed that they were able to hear audible prayers and hymns addressed to them even though they were not considered omnipresent (Van der Horst 1994: 2). The Greeks called their gods *theoi epēkooi*, 'gods who listen'. Nevertheless, silent or murmured prayer, though relatively rare among Greeks and Romans, did occur occasionally, for a variety of reasons (Van der Horst 1994: 2–12): (1) so that the prayer could not be heard by enemies, who might counter it with a more powerful prayer (*Il*. 7.195–6; Euripides, *El*. 803–10; Ovid, *Trist*. 1.1.27–30; Xenophon, *Eph*. 4.5); (2) because of the malevolence of some supernatural beings, e.g. the Erinyes or Eumenides, Greek gods of vengeance, whose very names were thought hazardous to mention aloud (Aeschylus, *Eum*. 1035, 1039); (3) shame regarding the erotic or sexual content of the prayer (Catullus 64.103–4; Tibulus 4.5.17–20); (4) because of the anti-social or even illegal content of the prayer, e.g. asking that someone will die quickly (Martial *Epig*. 1.39.5–8; Horace, *Ep*. 1.16.57–62; Seneca, *Ben*. 6.38.1–5); (5) to conceal the practice of magic or sorcery: 'Have you breathed silent prayers to heaven in some temple? You are a sorcerer!' (Apuleius, *Apol*. 54; Butler 1909: 94); or (6) because the development of philosophical monotheism which grew among Platonists and Stoics (e.g. Cicero, *Div*. 1.129: 'The minds of the gods, without eyes, ears or tongues, are mutually aware of what any of them feels, so that men, even when they wish or vow something silently, have no doubt of being heard' [Falconer, LCL]).

Postures and Gestures of Prayer

There are a wide variety of postures and gestures used when prayers are offered in the three major monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, including closed eyes, bowed head, folded hands, kneeling, raised hands, and prostration, used in various combinations. In the Greek world, the typical posture used when praying is standing with the right hand raised, sometimes both hands raised, with the palm or palms typically facing forwards and upwards and the face directed towards the region where the god or gods addressed are thought to dwell, i.e. heaven, sea, or underworld (Van Straten 1974: 159–89). According to Aristotle, *Mund*. 6.400a, 'All of us stretch out our hands to the heavens when we pray' (Furley, LCL).

While many have maintained that the Greeks did not kneel in prayer, there is clear iconographic evidence that some did on particular occasions (Van Straten 1974, 163, 165, 166, 169, 171, 183). The main reason why Greeks knelt before their gods is linked to the widespread Greek social and religious custom of *hiketeia* (supplication), i.e. a ritual act in which a person makes a humble entreaty to another individual with superior social prestige or to a god (Gould 1973). The related custom of *proskunēsis* (adoration, obeisance) differs from *hiketeia* in that it is the regular form of greeting between a social inferior and a social superior (Gould 1973: 75). There are two main forms of supplication: (1) the supplication of a god face-to-face (i.e. the image of a god), or (2) supplication through contact with the altar or the *temenos* (sacred precinct) of the god (Gould 1973: 76). The usual procedure for suppliants was to throw themselves on their knees at the altar upon arriving at a sanctuary (Van Straten 1974: 184).

There are several postures or gestures associated with Roman prayer practices (Corbeill 2004: 26–33): (1) standing with uplifted hands; (2) touching something significant, such as the earth (Macrobius, *Sat*. 2.9.12); (3) praying and sacrificing with the back of the head covered by a fold of the toga, i.e. *capite velato* (with the head covered), to avoid seeing signs of ill-omen (a non-Greek custom); (4) turning around clockwise (*dextroversum*) at the end of a prayer (Pliny *Nat*. 28.25); (5) striking the breast with one hand; (6) sitting down on the ground (e.g. Macrobius, *Sat*. 1.10.21); (7) kneeling or prostrating oneself before a deity, which the Romans understood as indicating piety, not fear; (8) kissing one's own right hand (with or without rotating the body clockwise) and blowing a kiss was part of the Roman ritual of *adoratio* in saluting the statue of a deity (Pliny, *Nat*. 28.25; Apuleius, *Metam*. 4.28), regarded by the Greeks as a non-Greek ritual.

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CHAPTER 15

MUSIC

JADE B. WEIMER

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the various contexts in which Graeco-Romans, ancient Israelites, and early Christians used, performed, and lived through musical expression and participation from approximately the fourth century BCE to the third century CE. The origins of melody were thought to be located in the divine realm and many cultural groups in the ancient world ascribed to the belief that melody was a celestial gift and this explains (at least in part) the great power and significance that musical practice had in this historical milieu. The main sources of information on the musical practices of these groups are literary and include a variety of discursive forms, including philosophical treatises, religious texts, and historical accounts. There are also many artistic representations of musical performances in ritual settings, including vase paintings, frescos, and sculptures. There are ritualistic aspects to musical expressions such as dancing or ecstatic utterances but this chapter will focus on singing, chanting, and instrumental performance within ritualized settings. This analysis serves to illustrate the pervasive presence of music in ritual through description but also to demonstrate the role that music plays in creating, maintaining, and perpetuating particular socio-religious identities. As Ronald Grimes argues, social groups tend to create rituals that are reflective of their values (2014: 282) and both melodies and song lyrics can be understood in this way.

Musical performance was an integral part of ritualized settings in the ancient world but the terms music and ritual are each plagued with inherent problems of definition. The nature of the relationship between music and ritual is a complex phenomenon that is in need of further study and analysis and there are several key questions that ought to be considered. For example, how can we define 'music' in the ancient world? How is music related to ritual practice and why is music such a prominent feature in ritualized settings? Is singing or instrumental performance itself always understood as a ritualized practice? How can we explain the function of music that accompanies specific forms of ritual practice, such as sacrifice, communal meals, or burial rites? While this chapter

will not provide definitive answers to all of the queries above, it will argue that there are several potential points of intersection in the relationship between music and ritual including the formation and maintenance of group identity and the initiation of emotional arousal during musical performance in ritualized settings.

The etymological root of the term 'music' is derived from the Greek *mousikē*, which referred to the art of the Muses in Greek mythology and included poetry, song lyrics, and other mythological narratives that were inspired by the Muses. Contemporary definitions of this term generally employ a variety of characteristics or attributes such as timbre, pitch, dynamic, rhythm, tempo, and texture. A series of sounds is organized in a specific order to create a melody or tune that can be sung or played on a variety of instruments. The parameters of the Western music tradition have been well defined but music in the ancient world is a slightly more ambiguous phenomenon. Music likely included categories such as song, chant, cantillation, and instrumental performance but the boundary between speech and song is difficult to distinguish. Additionally, the distinction between sound and music is also a point of debate among contemporary scholars and this further complicates a definition of music. In the ancient world, music and the related concept of harmony were inherently linked to cosmological and philosophical ideas about the nature of the world and human existence. Therefore, it is necessary to broaden the standard definitions of Western music in an ancient context in order to more fully encompass the various aspects of how cultural groups thought about, understood, embodied, and performed 'music'.

Definitions of ritual are equally difficult to construct. Grimes employs a family-resemblance strategy instead of a boundary-marking definition of ritual and for him, 'ritual is embodied, condensed, and prescribed enactment' (2014: 196). This is a useful way of thinking about ritual because it is focused enough to apply to various actions or behaviours that can be understood as ritualized but it also is general enough to acknowledge the potential overlap that ritual has with other human behaviours and actions. Barry Stephenson argues that 'ritual often involves expressive action heightened by emotion, brought to life by a range of media—music, dance, and the visual arts' (2015: 87). In Chapter 3 of this volume, Stephenson argues that ritual can be understood as action, performance, and practice. He contends that embodied performance is a significant aspect of ritual practice that facilitates social bonding through shared experience. This is a useful way of thinking about music in ritualized settings because it functions this way on several levels. First, music in these settings is generally a communal practice. This applies not only to performers themselves but also to members of a social or religious group who are observing musical performance. The communal nature of musical practice fosters a sense of shared experience and an emotional connection with other participants, particularly in the context of what we might classify as religious ritual. Second, musical practice in antiquity contributed to the formation, development, and maintenance of group identities. Music was a prominent topic in rhetorical discourse of early Christians and their ideas on musical theory and practice distinguished them from the Graeco-Romans and Israelites. Eventually variance musical practices contributed to the demarcation of heretical boundaries within various Christian assemblies.

Music in a ritualized setting functions in a way that may elicit a particular (and, ideally, appropriate) emotional response from participants (or even observers according to some cognitive studies on emotional contagion and synchrony). The connection between emotional response and collective identity is one that helps illuminate some of the key features between ritual and music or understanding music in certain contexts as ritual. Communal singing, in particular, is a dynamic embodied practice that includes two components of ritual emphasized by Grimes—human interaction and bodies in motion (2014: 243). The affective component links music and ritual insofar as it creates boundaries of acceptability where certain musical forms are deemed inappropriate because of the potential emotional response and subsequent thoughts or behaviours that occur as a result of melodic processing and performance. Melody and rhythm were thought to influence human behaviour, which was often defined or understood in moral terms. Affective response to music also generates a sense of shared identity among participants and leads to social cohesion among members, a claim which is further supported by cognitive science (Levitin 2006). Therefore, despite the obvious definitional problems with the terms 'music' and 'ritual', for the purpose of this chapter, ritual is understood according to Grimes' provisional definition quoted above, and music in ritualized settings in this analysis includes vocal and instrumental melodic works that employ normative compositional strategies of the socio-cultural groups outlined in each section.

Music in the Ancient World

Music permeated nearly all facets of life in the ancient world, including philosophical discourse, communal meals and banquets, religious rituals, theatrical performances, athletic competitions, daily manual labour, weddings, and funerary processions. These events often incorporated singing processions, choreographed dances accompanied by song, and ritual hymn performances. M. L. West, in his seminal work *Ancient Greek Music*, claims, 'no other people in history has made more frequent reference to music and musical activity in its literature and art' (1992: 1). Our knowledge of ancient Greek musical activity comes from a variety of sources such as archaeological evidence, artistic representations, inscriptions, papyri, and ancient poetic and philosophical writings. As early as the fourth century BCE, the Greeks used a written system of musical notation, which provides scholars with numerous examples of ancient musical scores, albeit often somewhat fragmentary. The majority of that musical notation, however, is dated to the Hellenistic and early Roman period and thus has much to tell us about Graeco-Roman music in that era.

Greek philosophers also argued that music (or more specifically scale modes) could evoke a certain feeling or emotional response in listeners/participants. For example, Damon explored the idea of assigning an ethos specific to each harmony (or scale modes), which emotionally affect the human soul in a positive or negative way. These

theories are recounted in Plato's work where he describes the nature of 'good' and 'bad' harmonies and rhythms articulated by Damon (*Republic* 3.398–403). Plato deems, for example, the mixed Lydian mode to be useless and argues that one should do away with it completely. The Dorian mode, on the other hand, is characterized as fit for brave men who are heading off to war. These two examples illustrate how Greek philosophers characterized various melodic typologies and linked them to particular affective responses.

Musical practice was also a key component in the daily lives of the ancient Israelites. There are numerous references to instruments and singing in the Hebrew Bible. Singing played an integral role in a variety of contexts, and instruments, such as the lyre and the trumpet, were used in a variety of cultic rituals. For example, upon the return of Saul and David from the battle with the Philistines in 1 Samuel 18:6, they are greeted by a contingent of women who are singing, playing, and dancing in celebration of their victory. The musical aspect of this narrative is meant to convey a sense of shared communitas in the victory, which is celebrated with music; presumably with a song that has a rapid tempo and a joyous melody to elicit a feeling of exuberance and excitement. Music was also a vital part of the Temple cult in Jerusalem and there is evidence of music in ritualized settings in sectarian Jewish communities as evidenced by the literary works that describe the community/communities at Qumran and Philo's Therapeutae. The role of song and instrument in the formation of the early synagogue, however, is much more ambiguous and unclear.

Music in Worship and Sacrifice

Musical performance and public religious worship were inextricably linked in the Graeco-Roman world of Mediterranean antiquity. Music was viewed as a gift from the gods but it was also understood that the gods took pleasure from hearing music. This was the impetus for the use of music at public cultic ceremonies. Johannes Quasten argues that this was the case in both Greek and Roman ceremonial contexts and this understanding of music can be extended insofar as music was thought to have some type of magical power. This so-called power of music is apparent in the notion that musical performance had the twofold purpose of bringing 'joy to the gods that were already well-disposed and to appease the angered deity' (Quasten 1983: 1–2). Musical elements were employed at different stages during cultic celebrations, including sacrifices, processions, incense offering, and libations. Various scenes of this sort are depicted on vases that date to the seventh century BCE, and West (1992) cites numerous literary references to processions that include dancing, singing, and instrumental accompaniment.

Sacrificial ceremonies often included a musical component and the earliest evidence within the ancient Greek context dates to approximately 1300 BCE. Archaeological excavations at the Minoan settlement on the island of Crete revealed a limestone sarcophagus that depicted two ritual practices—funerary rites and the sacrifice of a bull. The sarcophagus shows a man playing a seven-stringed kithara beside a woman who is offering a libation and a flute-player standing behind the bull (Quasten 1983: 2). There

are also numerous textual references to the musical elements of the sacrificial cult. Plutarch describes how flute music was an important part of sacrificial rite in the cult of Apollo (*Mus.* 14) while Lucian of Samosata writes that no sacrifice was carried out at Delos without accompaniment by the flute and lyre (*Salt.* 16). Instrumental performance was integral to Greek sacrificial ritual performance in terms of facilitating communication with the divine and measuring ritual efficacy. There are numerous other examples (including the cult of Apollo) where choruses of men, women, and children performed. Sacrifices were also performed during the Great Panathenaea in Athens, which was an athletic and musical competition held every fourth year. Male and female choruses sang paeans, groups of young men performed ring-dances, and after the ritual animal sacrifice on the morning of the opening day of the festival, musicians played in an orchestra on such instruments as the kithara (a stringed instrument in the lyre family) and the aulos (a double-reed pipe) while the audience sang. Music in this context served to facilitate collective communication with the divine realm and also to communicate one's devotion or religious commitment to the others present at the sacrifice.

The link between music and sacrificial ritual is also present in a Roman context. Cicero decrees there ought to be flutes, harps, and song present at veneration of the gods, which may take place during athletic games (Cicero, *Leg.* 2, 9). The poet Ovid writes in his work *Fasti*, that the flutists were highly regarded and the flute was played at shrines, athletic games, and at funerals (Ovid, *Fast.* VI, 657–60). Livy contends that this practice originated with the Etruscans and eventually the Roman flutists formed an association called the *Collegium Tibicinum Romanorum* (Livy 7, 2, 4). These musicians were paid a commission to play at various religious festivals in Rome. Eventually, this group joined up with the official college of lute players and this joint association had special privileges from the start, which included free food at the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline, a feast dedicated specifically to them, and other unique honours (Quasten 1983: 8–9; Péché 2001: 307–38). Other descriptions of Roman sacrificial rites included singing and clapping. In the *History of Rome* 27, 37, Livy describes a sacrificial rite performed in Rome where two animals were led through the city as virgins sang hymns. They sang specific hymns prepared for the ritual sacrifice to the goddess Juno Regina and they carried images of the goddess as they sang. Livy also writes that they beat the time or rhythm of the hymn with their feet, which seemed to correspond to the pace of the procession and the tempo of the melody. This remark demonstrates the embodied nature of musical performance during sacrificial ritual and the significance of synchronous cooperation in establishing the correct parameters for ritual performance. It also reinforces the identity of the participants as group members of this particular cultic group and strengthens social bonds through shared embodied experience.

The roots of music in ritualized settings in ancient Judaism may be found in Hebrew Bible references that describe various uses of instrumental and vocal performance in the Temple. The Temple was the economic, political, and religious nucleus of ancient Israel and it was the site of priestly sacrifice, major festivals, and weekly worship. These ritualistic elements all included musical performance of some sort. In fact, vocal and instrumental components were integral to most ritual performances within the Temple. The Jewish

aristocracy began to assign professional musicians to their court during this period and they also developed subsequent musical organizations within the Temple hierarchy such as the Levites who were in charge of musical performances (Neh. 12:27–30; 1 Chr. 1:15–16; 2 Chr. 7:6; 23:18; 34:12). There are numerous Hebrew Bible references to music in the Temple but it is important to note that not all of these works are necessarily accurate in their descriptions of these rituals. Smith argues that the musical references found in Chronicles (which was composed after the Babylonian exile) describes musical practice in such detail that this is likely a retrojection of the author's time period rather than an accurate description of musical practice in the First Temple period (2011: 38–9). The books of Ezra and Nehemiah describe David ordering the appointment of musicians from the Levites and the number of musicians greatly increased when David began constructing plans for the Temple in Jerusalem before his death (Ezra 2:41, 2:70). When Solomon later consecrated the Temple, there was a joyous celebration, which involved singing, playing, and praising the Lord. There are several instruments mentioned in First Chronicles that were used, such as trumpets, cymbals, and stringed instruments.

Instruments were also an important part of sacrificial rites at the Temple. The Hebrew Bible references three types of instruments (strings, percussion, and wind), which were common at sacrificial ceremonies, other religious festivals, and prophetic experiences. Psalm 150, for example, commands that one should praise the Lord with trumpets, lutes, harps, tambourines, dance, strings, pipes, and cymbals. Praise and sacrifice at the Temple were of particular importance and instrumental performance occurred several times throughout the service. 2 Chr. contains several key references to music at sacrificial rites (2 Chr. 5:12–13, 7:3–6, 29:26–30). There are several procedural steps listed in 2 Chr. 29:26–30, including: offering of the sacrifice, the performance of a Levitical cultic song, the blowing of the trumpets carried out by the priests, general prostration, the repetition of all four stages until the completion of the burnt offering, Levitical singing of the psalms, and, finally, general prostration. Therefore, it is evident that both singing and instrumental performance were integral components to sacrifice, particularly in the Second Temple. Other references, in the Mishnah, for example, detail similar rites but include slight variations such as alternative instruments, the addition of libations, or differences in the order of events (m. Tamid 7:3; m. Pesahim 5:5–7).

Music in early synagogue liturgy, however, is difficult to characterize with any degree of certainty and scholars generally concur that it is challenging (if not impossible) to pinpoint what type of music (if any) was performed in that context. The origins of the synagogue are still strongly contested among scholars but there is both written evidence and archaeological remnants to confirm that the synagogue was an established religious institution by the first century CE throughout Israel/Palestine and in the Jewish Diaspora (Levine 2005). Prior to the first century CE, however, it is unlikely that there was any type of fixed liturgy. Therefore, prior to the third century CE, there were no fixed scriptural passages that were read in the synagogue as part of a worship service (Smith 2011: 131). The Torah was certainly read during worship and the writings of the Prophets were also included but prior to the destruction of the Temple, there was no known formalized liturgical structure in the synagogue.

One of the main differences between worship in the synagogue and the Temple was the lack of sacrificial rites. Sacrifice and singing were inherently linked in the Temple cult and since this rite is not carried out in the synagogue, this may explain why there are no references to 'song' or instruments connected with the synagogue in Jewish literature from antiquity. In addition, the elite priests, who included the Levitical singers, were not present in the synagogue, so the lack of professional musicians may also explain the lack of musical references. We can conclude, however, that word-centred worship in the synagogue was an important component to communal gatherings. Verbal recitation was always oscillating back and forth between the spoken word and song or cantillation. There are also Mishanic references to the position of *sheliach Tsibbur*, or emissary of the community, who was responsible for the cantillated recitation of texts (see m. Ber. 5.5 that describes a congregational reader commissioned by the community).

Weddings and Funerals

Music rituals were present at private ceremonial functions in addition to state-sponsored religious festivals, both in the Classical and Hellenistic periods. Weddings and funerals could potentially be described as 'private ceremonies' but both often included processionals in the public domain, which would be visible to those not directly involved in the ritual itself. Homer describes the ceremonial processional from the bride's family dwelling to her new home along with the groom. This processional included dancing, choral accompaniment, and instrumental performances. He mentions the hymenaeal, or wedding song, a group of young male dancers, and the sounds of the auloi and lyres (Homer, *Il.* 18, 492–6). After the wedding procession concluded and the bride and groom retired for the evening, the singing continued on into the night. In addition to the processional, other elements of the wedding ceremony were accompanied by musical performance. For example, prior to the processional, there was a communal meal celebration at the home of the bride's parents and the morning after the processional there was an informal gathering of friends and family that included the exchange of gifts. At the communal meal celebration, guests sang a song directed to the couple that was a parody of sorts, imitating the type of song sung at a comedic theatrical performance. Additionally, some of the wedding songs included descriptions of the bridal chamber and these descriptions were meant to parallel the bridal chambers of the gods and their sacred union (Hague 1983: 133–5). This event was a joyous one and the musical component was central to the celebration. It facilitated a sense of shared enjoyment and created a celebratory affective tone of the wedding.

The funeral was another important ritual practice in the ancient Graeco-Roman world that, like the wedding ceremony, included numerous members of the community. Funerals were public spectacles where the upper-class could display their wealth by hiring professional mourners who wailed for the dead. It is difficult to distinguish 'singing' and 'wailing' in this context but several sources mention the instrumental accompaniment as well as the practice of hiring foreign singers (see Plato, *Leg.* 7 800e;

Aeschylus, *Pers.* 935–40; Homer, *Il.* 24, 719–76; Homer, *Od.* 24, 46–64). There were specific funeral dirges that were performed at the time of burial or at later times to commemorate the dead. However, during the late Archaic and early Classical periods, there were prohibitions against lamentations for the dead in order to limit the ostentatious nature of some funeral rituals. Yet, there are numerous examples that describe the performance of funeral dirges and lamentations (Euripides, *Heracl.* 1025; Xenophon, *Ages.* 10). The Romans also sang funeral dirges to mourn their dead and Suetonius provides a detailed description of this practice (*Aug.* 98) in his narrative of Augustus' funeral where children of high rank (both boys and girls) were employed to sing the prescribed lamentations. Thus, the funeral dirge was an important outlet for the expression of sorrow and grief, and procession can be understood as an embodied performance of this sorrow, which is intensified by the use of music.

There are very few references in Jewish literary sources to musical performances at weddings. Several passages in Jeremiah (7:34, 16:9, 25:10) make reference to singing by the bride and groom at their wedding but beyond that there are relatively few examples that provide any detail on the role or function of music at Jewish weddings in antiquity. Funerals, on the other hand, fall under the category of lamentation and ancient Israelites expressed their sorrow and grief through a variety of musical expressions, including dirges, wailing, and lamentations (Smith 2011: 125). The Mishnah contains the most comprehensive description of Jewish death and mourning rituals. After the death of a family member, it is the responsibility of the closest adult male relative to take on the funeral planning and financial obligation. Once the family was made aware of the death, they had to prepare the body for burial, and during this process, other mourners in the family would express their sorrow through weeping and tearing their clothes. In addition, the family hired professional musicians (generally pipers) and female mourners and these groups were responsible for playing dirges on their instruments and wailing. After the body was prepared, the family would carry the bier in a processional to the place of burial and during the procession, the professional mourners would follow along while wailing and clapping. The musicians accompanied the procession, playing their pipes as they walked (m. Pesah. 8:6; m. Ta'an. 4:7; m. Meg. 3:3; 4:3; m. Mo'ed Qat. 1:5–6; 3:5; 3:7–9; m. Hag. 2:4; m. Ket. 2:10; 4:4.). The slow rhythmic nature of the processional established a feeling of solemnity and sadness and created a sense of shared sorrow among the mourners.

Musical Performance at Domestic Meals

The symposium was an essential part of Greek culture. As Richard Ascough argues (Chapter 12 in this volume), communal meals were prevalent in Graeco-Roman antiquity and they served to create and reinforce social rank. Even though these meals took place inside the home, Ascough describes them as semi-public events that were used to negotiate relationships through ritualized behaviour. Musical performance was a vital component of this social institution and participants would sing whatever types of songs they wished, including hymns honouring a deity, a political commentary or

exhortation, reflections on the joys of wine or the pain of heartbreak, moral advice, and satirical commentary directed towards other guests in jest (West 1992: 25). Music permeated the entire event, as there were songs sung at the beginning, during, and at the end of the meal. The most common instruments that accompanied the singing were the flute, the pipe, the lyre, and sometimes the harp. The lyre was perhaps the most commonly used instrument because the lyre provided accompaniment for the *skolion*, a traditional song sung at the symposium. Those who did not have the training in lyre-playing were thought to be uneducated because the lyre was considered an 'aristocratic instrument' (Comotti 1991: 60–1). In addition, often courtesans were hired to dance, play instruments, sing, and perhaps perform other services. Despite the dominant practice of hosting a male-only symposium, the women of the household would often gather in their own quarters and singing was also a part of their domestic assembly. The musical element to these gatherings served to bring attendees together in a shared enjoyment of an instrumental performance or reinforce social bonds through communal singing. Music and food are inextricably linked in this context, which is something that Graeco-Romans shared with many other contemporary groups, including their Jewish neighbours.

Meals such as 'ritualized Jewish banquets celebrated by groups of disciples gathered around an authoritative Rabbi, or teacher, or at a family-centered meal that still survive today in Jewish homes' (Fassler and Jeffrey 1992: 84–5) were performed. The family-centred meals in question may include the weekly Sabbath meal or perhaps the Passover Seder. During these gatherings, people would get together and pray, sing (psalms and perhaps hymns), read scripture, and receive religious instruction. Therefore, domestic space was an integral aspect of Jewish ritual practice and music functioned as a key component of that ritual.

Singing and Instrumental Performance in Graeco-Roman Mystery Cults and Jewish Sectarian Communities

The Graeco-Roman mystery cults of antiquity also employed music in ritualized settings in various ways. While scholars have relatively limited information on the initiation rites of mystery cults (see Martin, Chapter 19 in this volume), one commonality that exists among many of them is the inclusion of percussion instruments, which may be connected to some form of dancing. Lucian notes the common feature of dance as part of initiation rites into mystery cults, which generally included percussive accompaniment (Lucian, *Salt.* 15). Euripides (*Bacch.* 73–80) describes the 'Bacchic revels' where adherents participate in frenzied dancing with the playing of drums. This description of a highly emotive setting illustrates the significance of music in the role of creating a particular affective environment which was necessary for full participation in the ritual. The frenetic pace of the music induced an uncontrolled state of consciousness where participants were freed from normative social constraints and this in part contributed to later Christian condemnation of instrumental (and particularly percussive) performance in the context of worship.

Two of the many sectarian groups that existed in Second Temple Jewish society can tell us something about musical practice within Judaism during the late second Temple period. The community/communities at Qumran and the Therapeutae (likely based somewhere outside Alexandria) are Jewish groups who practised voluntary separation from the rest of society (although perhaps less so with the assembly/assemblies at Qumran), shared all material possessions and financial holdings, renounced bodily pleasures, and gathered together for corporate worship (Smith 1984: 11). It should be noted, however, that traditional conceptions of the Qumran community as a single entity that produced the entire corpus of the Dead Sea Scrolls have been challenged. In their Introduction to the *Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, John J. Collins and Timothy H. Lim note some of these divergent opinions and contend that it is unlikely the entire corpus was composed and used at Qumran.

Sectarian communities developed unique liturgical forms, and musical expression played a distinct role in communal worship practices. While it is important to note that they are not necessarily representative of Jewish musical practices more generally, they are extremely helpful in articulating the role of musical expression in the daily life of these groups. Liturgical texts contained within the Dead Sea Scrolls contain information about singing and instrumental performance at Qumran and this appears to have been an integral part of community participation. According to Angela Kim Harkins, there are seven major categories of poetic and liturgical texts: (1) liturgies for fixed prayer times; (2) ceremonial liturgies; (3) eschatological prayers; (4) magical incantations; (5) Psalmic collections; (6) *Hodayot* hymns; and (7) prayers embodied in narratives (2003: 26; see also Harkins and Dunkle, Chapter 35 in this volume). These distinctive categories illuminate the various contexts in which song or cantillation of texts was employed, which is important because life at Qumran was embodied in liturgical texts, and that song itself can be considered a dialect of sorts that helps shape identity and demarcates social boundaries (Newsom 2004: 5–9). Several of these scrolls make reference to unique forms of musical practice, including the Community Rule Scroll (1QS X 9) and the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice.

The sectarian Jewish community known as the Therapeutae is only mentioned in Philo's *On the Contemplative Life* and subsequent references to Philo in Eusebius. There are no other extant historical documents that describe this assembly but Philo's summary provides a detailed synopsis of their purported activities, including liturgical rituals. He writes about the musical performances of the Therapeutae within the context of a celebratory communal meal where singing takes place both before and after the food is consumed. In *De Vita Contemplativa*, Philo includes an interesting passage that describes the musical practices of the group (Philo, *Contempl.* XI, 83–8). There are several notable features of the text. First, this is a unique example of Jewish choral song combined with dance. There are no other known examples of such a phenomenon at the Jerusalem Temple or even in other Jewish contexts. Second, there are no references to instrumental performance in Philo's account, which suggests that the Therapeutae did not use instrumental accompaniment and relied solely on vocal musical expression in their liturgy and worship. Third, both men and women had

important roles in vocal performance. They sang separately at first but then joined together to form one chorus. It is also interesting to note that Philo recounts that a leader of the chorus is selected who is 'most honourable and excellent' (Philo, *Contempl.* XI, 83) but he does not specify the gender here. Based on Philo's account, the Therapeutae assembly placed a high degree of importance on participation in musical performance regardless of gender, and all members of the community contributed to these performances in a meaningful way.

Additional passages of Philo's description denote several types of singing. There was a pre-meal responsorial performance, which may parallel the singing of the Hallel in the synagogue or even the domestic Passover meal. After the meal, Philo describes two choirs that sang together, separately, and antiphonally. One particularly interesting aspect of Philo's description can be seen where he comments on how the choral leader is chosen. This selection is based on honour as well as musical talent. In other words, the quality of performance was important to the Therapeutae community and Philo himself is apparently impressed by the musical aptitude of the community as a whole (Smith 2011: 126). Philo also seems to connect technical perfection and aesthetic appeal with devotion and piety and this demonstrates both Philo's own personal emphasis on musical performance as well as the uniqueness of the Therapeutae liturgy as compared to what we know about the Temple cult or worship in the synagogue.

Music in Early Christianity: Defining a Unique Identity and Unifying the Assembly

From the earliest gatherings of Christ-followers, singing was an integral component in both public and domestic worship. There are very few references in New Testament texts that describe the use of instruments but the gospels, the Pauline Epistles, and the Pastorals all mention psalms, hymns, or singing in the context of prayer, divine communication, prophetic experiences, and communal praise. Moreover, Revelation 5:9 and 14:3 also reference the 'New Song', which is likely a more allegorical usage of musical imagery but nonetheless there are various examples of musical references in New Testament texts. These references depict a certain level of fluidity pertaining to the musical elements of communal gatherings. For this reason, it has been difficult to make any conclusive statements about liturgical practices in the first century. In addition, the scarcity of textual references to music in the New Testament challenges our ability to provide a definitive picture of what this unstructured musical practice may have actually looked like but the references we do have illuminate certain aspects of musical practice in the earliest Christ-following communities.

While there are many elements of similarity between early Christian uses of music in ritualized settings and their Jewish and Graeco-Roman counter-parts, there are two

key points of divergence. First, early Christians rejected the use of instruments because of the supposed association with Graeco-Roman traditions such as the theatre, athletic games, and sacrificial rites carried out in honour of the gods (Tertullian, *Spect.* x, 2 and 8–9; Clement, *Paed.* II, iv; Novatian, *Spect.* VII, 1–3). Second, early Christian writers such as Ignatius argued that the assembly ought to sing in unison (Ign. *Eph*. IV, 1–2). This served as both a metaphor for the unity of all Christ-followers and a prescription for actual practice during worship. Both of these mandates put forth within the first two centuries highlight the emphasis on an emerging shared identity, and communal singing was one way in which early Christ-followers attempted to distinguish themselves from their Jewish and Graeco-Roman counterparts.

Pauline Epistles

Chronologically, the earliest references to music in the New Testament are found in the Pauline Epistles. Most of Paul's references to music are contained within his first letter to the Corinthians. There are several key passages from 1 Corinthians, which include references to singing, instruments, and psalms. Paul mentions instruments in 1 Cor. 14:7–8 and 1 Cor. 15:51–2 and in these passages, Paul uses an instrumental metaphor to clarify the legitimacy of glossolalia and emphasize the importance of intelligibility in communal worship. Paul's choice of metaphor in this case represents an attempt to use images that would have been familiar to his audience, including references to the flute, harp, and cymbals. However, no conclusive inference can be drawn here with respect to Paul's opinion on the use of instruments in worship or whether instruments were in fact part of communal gatherings at this time. In 1 Cor. 14:15 and 14:26–7, Paul mentions singing with the spirit and the mind and perhaps most significantly he describes the gatherings of Christ-followers, where each person joins the congregation and brings a psalm, which indicates the prevalence of singing in worship within the Corinthian assembly. Paul makes no specific reference to singing in unison and the literary evidence suggests this becomes an integral part of communal singing only towards the beginning of the second century.

Two of the most oft-quoted passages about singing are located in the disputed Pauline epistles Ephesians 5:18–20 and Colossians 3:16–17. The author of the first passage warns participants 'not to become drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming in your hearts to the Lord'. The differences between the three terms that Paul uses—psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs—remain unclear. These terms may be considered 'loose synonyms' that were used almost interchangeably; however, one might distinguish between three types of texts that were sung in this early period: psalms (specifically the 151–5 Biblical Psalms), canticles or odes (such as those found in Ex. 15 or Hab. 3), and non-scriptural hymns (Fassler and Jeffery 1992: 86). There Lukan canticles (Magnificat in Luke 1:46–55, Benedictus in Luke 1:68–79, and Nunc Dimittis in Luke 2:29–32) are another example of New

Testament references to song but it remains unclear as to whether or not these canticles were actually used during worship.

First- and Second-Century Christian Writings: Singing in Unison and Rejection of Instruments

Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, employed musical metaphors in his letters that conceptualized musical imagery and practice in a particular way. In the *Letter to the Ephesians*, Ignatius writes that a person should be attuned to their bishop as strings to a kithara. He emphasizes the unity of the assembly when he advocates that 'you might sing in one voice through Jesus Christ to the Father' (Ign. *Eph.* 4:1–2). Ignatius stresses the importance of singing with one voice and this becomes a popular theme in later patristic writings where singing with one voice is used as a metaphor for the desired unity of the entire Christ-following assembly. However, his emphasis also suggests that singing in unison was an important component of worship in the assembly. The performative act of ritualized singing in unison served to create a strong sense of shared experience and facilitate emotional bonding with other group members. As Stephenson argues, 'ritual, as bodily action, is a way of knowing the world' (2015: 87) that in this case conveys a particular worldview and socio-religious identity, both to members within the group and outsiders alike.

The *Hortatory Address to the Greeks*, often attributed to Justin Martyr despite evidence to the contrary, also employs metaphorical use of instruments and an emphasis on singing in unison. In Chapter 8, the author explains that during the heavenly descent the Divine will use men as musical instruments such as the kithara and lyre, and through this instrumental usage, knowledge of the divine is revealed. This does not inherently suggest a negative attitude towards instruments, as we find in later writings, but the sole use of metaphorical images of instruments may suggest a subtle hint to move away from their usage within the Christian assembly. In the same chapter, the author writes about the instrumental function of the prophets, arguing that they are in conformity and harmony with one another, as if speaking from one mouth. There is no explicit mention of singing here but this reference demonstrates the early Christian preoccupation with vocal (and perhaps ritual) uniformity among members as a way to distinguish themselves from other socio-religious groups.

Formalizing Communal Singing and Instrumental Prohibitions: Clement of Alexandria

By the third century CE, negative views on instrumental usage and positive emphases on singing in unison were commonplace in Christian discourse. The most systematic account of these ideas may be found in the writings of Clement of Alexandria.

Clement wrote at length about music and the daily lives of Christ-followers in the early third century. Music is a theme that pervades his theological doctrine and his articulation of proper Christian etiquette and social conduct. He supported musical practice in what he deemed to be a ritualized and sacred environment. Clement also made a clear distinction between appropriate music one could practise or participate in and other types of musical expression that were not appropriate. He focused this critique mainly on instrumental usage and elements of musical theory, ritual setting, and behaviours that he associated with particular musical forms. For example, Clement only approved of certain melodies or rhythms, which did not provoke acts that he connected to Greek cultic ritual practices. He favoured the use of musical allegories to articulate and explain his theological interpretations. He described the body as an instrument of worship; specifically, a superior instrument as compared to other musical instruments, such as the flute or lyre. This relates to the notion that the human body is a divine creation in the image of God and this inherently suggests a level of superiority in comparison with an instrument created by human beings. It also likely reflects the aforementioned condemnation of musical instruments by various early Christian writers. In *Paedagogus* II, 4, Clement outlines acceptable behaviour for a Christian attending banquets and dinner parties, which addresses the role of instrumental music in this context. He condemns the use of choruses, wind and percussion instruments, and dancing, which he likens to mechanisms of deception. Clement argues that these instruments ought to be banished from the symposium because they encourage drunkenness, promiscuity, and other behaviours, which are deemed to be wicked. Therefore, musical practice is understood to be an integral component of an emerging Christian identity but there were limitations to the uses of music because the ways in which Graeco-Romans employed various musical forms, some of which were considered idolatrous and sexualized.

Clement, like Ignatius, also emphasizes harmony and unity over dissonance and he uses allegorical references to music. Certain melodic modes and formulations were considered to be outside of the acceptable boundaries of musical practice. Clement argued, in what is perhaps one of the most well-known musical quotations in early Christianity, 'chromatic harmonies are therefore to be abandoned to immodest revels, and to florid and meretricious music' (Clement, *Paed*. II, 4; PG VIII 445). Clement, like many other early church fathers, understood unity and harmony to stand in direct opposition to duality and disharmony. This conceptualization of unity was meant to emphasize the sense of communitas on Earth but also the unity one finds in salvation with God. Christians were supposed to sing with one voice to unite them all as one community in God but also to increase the power and strength of their worship. One voice served to solidify their faith and to create strong social bonds and a unified identity. Dissonant chords, for Clement, represented the evil in the good/evil duality and he clearly thought that these types of melodies possessed the power to attract or draw Christians to pagan practices and away from the unified and singular voice of Christianity.

In the *Stromata*, Clement of Alexandria writes about the role of the sacred song in Christian life. He states, 'So then, all [our] life, we celebrate a feast persuaded that God is everywhere and in everything; we plough the fields while praising [God], we sail while singing, and at every other public event we busy ourselves skillfully' (Clement, *Strom.* VII, vii, 35; PG IX, 452). This passage is indicative of the all-pervasiveness of musical practice in antiquity and more specifically in Clement's Alexandria. Praise through song was ideally present in all aspects of daily life, whether at the dinner table or working the land. This is evident from Clement's own background; he gave credence to Greek musical philosophy (such as the connection between music and ethos and the ability of certain modes to evoke predictable emotional responses) but articulated a specific position on when, where, and how musical components should be incorporated within the context of the Christian assembly. Thus, the parameters of musical performance were one of several ways in which Clement defined the Christian assembly in unique terms as compared with their Jewish and Graeco-Roman neighbours.

Conclusion

Music in ritualized settings was a firmly embedded practice in the socio-religious world of Mediterranean antiquity and Graeco-Romans, Jews, and early Christians lived in fluid and dynamic cultural systems. Music was an integral aspect of ritualized practice in the Graeco-Roman world, and the significance of music goes beyond a ubiquitous historical phenomenon insofar as it contributed to changing and developing religious identities. Musical performance also facilitated social bonding among group members in a variety of socio-religious settings, particularly in the case of early Christianity, where singing in unity was emphasized and encouraged as a way to solidify that sense of community and religious identity.

There are numerous points of intersection between Graeco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian uses of music in ritualized contexts of antiquity. Each group employed singing and/or instrumental use in various ways and places, including both liturgical and domestic settings. Early Christ-followers, however, were distinct from their Jewish and Graeco-Roman counterparts insofar as they emphasized singing over instrumental use, and authorities within these assemblies used musical practices to distinguish themselves from these other religious worldviews and ritual engagements. The literary evidence demonstrates that early Christian writers emphasized communal singing in unison and this can be understood as an attempt to solidify emerging Christian identities during the first three centuries. This ritualized practice served to create a shared sense of social bonding and the negative disposition towards instrumental usage was equally influential in distinguishing that identity as distinct from other socio-religious identities. In-group identity within early Christian assemblies was generated in part through music

in ritual and this identity was characterized by a rejection of musical instruments and a focus on singing in unison during worship and liturgy.

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CHAPTER 16

SACRIFICE AND VOTIVES

DANIEL ULLUCCI

The Allure of Sacrifice

The ritualized killing of animals in the ancient Mediterranean has frequently drawn the avid attention of scholars. There are likely two reasons for this. First, unlike other equally common and important practices such as prayer, song, and dance, the artefacts of sacrifice endure, from household altars and vase paintings to sprawling temple complexes. More significantly, sacrifice has drawn scholarly attention for reasons having little to do with the ancient Mediterranean and much to do with the specific cultural history of Europe and the Americas. The study of religion has been, and largely still is, dominated by European and North American males of Christian (largely Protestant) background. These scholars came from a cultural context in which the ritualized killing and offering of animals were not only unknown, but explicitly rejected and castigated. Ritual killing and offering were also part of various ideologies of the 'other', associated with conceptions of savagery and the primitive. These ideologies were activated and expanded repeatedly as Western powers, through colonial activity, encountered other cultures that did practise sacrifice.

The presence of sacrifice among ancient cultures claimed as ancestors by the Western genealogical myth (e.g. Greeks and Romans) also demanded response and explanation. Tellingly, those responses often took the same form as the responses made to contemporaneous cultural others: at times the 'other' is scorned as primitive (the 'barbarian'); at times the 'other' is fetishized as pristine and in contact with mystical powers of nature (the 'noble savage'). These two opposing approaches to sacrifice can be seen in the works of Girard (1972) and Burkert (1972), respectively.

In approaching scholarship on ancient Mediterranean sacrifice, reflexivity is critical. There is no Archimedian point, but the more reflexive scholars can be, the better chance they have of producing meaningful work that will be credible to later generations.

The aim of this chapter is to lay out the basic evidence for ancient Mediterranean offering practices as well as a broad, transcultural theoretical framework for understanding these practices.

Terms

For the purposes of this chapter, I make no significant distinction between animal sacrifice, offerings of other foods (wine, oil, grain, etc.), monetary offerings, or the offering/dedication of objects (votives). This follows the current scholarly trend of de-privileging so-called 'blood' sacrifices (McClymond 2008).

There were thousands of different types of offerings in the ancient Mediterranean, involving radically different practices. For some projects of analysis it would certainly be critical to differentiate, for example, an alimentary sacrifice of a bull from the deposition of a clay figurine. However, for the purposes this macro-scale project, the basic logic behind these practices is the same and it is more valuable to see them all as part of the basic practice of reciprocity.

For my purposes, sacrifice is the giving (broadly conceived) of any *physical thing* to a non-obvious being (i.e. a being whose existence is claimed, but not *prima facie* evident to all).[1] In the modern world, 'sacrifice' has a broad range of metaphorical meanings; this was just as true in the ancient Mediterranean. I will argue, however, that it is critical for scholars to clearly separate the giving of actual physical things from the broad array of metaphorical 'sacrifices' (cf. Eberhart, Chapter 26 in this volume). The definition given above is not presented as a universal definition, but rather a deliberately constructed second-order analytic category (see McClymond 2008; Sheehan 2009).

Theorizing Sacrifice

For the reasons stated above, theories of sacrifice have abounded. Because of its cultural salience and pervasiveness worldwide, theories of sacrifice have often tied it to supposedly fundamental aspects of human nature and even the root cause and purpose of religion itself. For excerpts of the classic theories, see Carter (2003). For analysis, see Bell (1997), Faraone and Naiden (2012), and Knust and Várhelyi (2011).

All of the classical theories of sacrifice have been rejected as reductionist and/or as not fitting the ancient evidence (Smith 1987; Sheehan 2009; Lincoln 2012). More recent scholarship has moved away from singular, grand theories by contextualizing the practice within a much broader understanding of culture and religion (Faraone and Naiden 2012). Additionally, more recent approaches have recognized the broad range of meanings and functions that could be ascribed to sacrifice in various historical and cultural contexts, thus reversing the older tendency to reduce the ritual to a single, deep meaning (Knust and Várhelyi 2011). This development follows a current trend in ritual studies generally (Grimes 2014).

The most fruitful current models have approached sacrifice as an example of the intersection of two trans-human, evolutionary phenomena: ritualization and reciprocity.

[1] On this terminology, developed by Stanley Stowers, see Arnal and McCutcheon (2013).

Ritualization, the strategic bracketing of otherwise mundane behaviours as special and significant in some way, is common in advanced social animals such as primates, but can even be seen in simpler organisms such as eusocial insects (Hölldobler et al. 2009; Stephenson 2015). Ritualizing behaviour arises naturally in human children around the age of 2 and peaks around the age of 5 (Boyer 2010). Following this, ritualizing behaviour remains at a reduced level throughout life. In some individuals, for reasons that remain unclear, ritualizing behaviour reaches a pathological level, known as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). By observing children, adults, and OCD sufferers, we now have a fairly good understanding of how ritualized behaviour is used strategically in a broad array of contexts (Boyer 2010).

Reciprocity, i.e. the creation, indexing, negotiation, and contestation of complex webs of relationships through practices of unequal giving and receiving, is also a transhuman phenomenon observable in advanced social animals (Wilson 1980; Seaford 1994; Hölldobler et al. 2009). Mastery of the tactics of reciprocity is innate in humans unless impaired by a pathology (autism, for example) (Boyer 2010).

Offering practices result from the intersection of these two completely quotidian evolutionary adaptations with the (possibly) unique human tendency to project human-like agents (non-obvious beings). The human tendency to project non-obvious beings is also the result of evolutionary processes and is innate (Pyysiäinen 2009). We could thus clarify the above working definition of sacrifice: *sacrifice is the practice of ritualized reciprocity with non-obvious beings via physical offerings*.

Reciprocity: Asymmetrical and Diachronic

As eusocial animals, humans have evolved an innate mastery of using reciprocity to index, maintain, and negotiate relationships. This is far more complex than the phrase *do ut des* suggests. Acts of reciprocity index hierarchies, articulate relationships of power, signal dominance and subservience, work to restore damaged relationships and maintain strong ones, and much more. As anyone who has ever bought a gift knows, reciprocity is a complicated and potentially fraught act, which entangles one in a complex web of social norms, expectations, obligations, emotions, and ambiguous signals. Our evolutionary history has given us the cognitive abilities—and innate tendencies—to weave and navigate these sticky social webs (Wilson 2004).

At its heart, reciprocity is about exchange, but a very specific kind of exchange with rules and consequences. Various scholars have theorized different types of reciprocity and developed taxonomies, often conflicting, to describe these types (see Sahlins 1972; Seaford 1994; Stegemann and Stegemann 1995; Crook 2005). The type of reciprocity discussed here has two main characteristics: (1) asymmetry—the exchange does not need to be equal and thus can be carried on between parties with very different levels of material and social capital; and (2) diachronicity—exchange is ongoing over an indefinite period of time. It is not a single transaction resulting in a zero balance.

These characteristics can best be seen by contrasting asymmetrical and diachronic reciprocity with much simpler (socially speaking) economic exchange (which Sahlins calls 'balanced reciprocity', illustrating the confusion in taxonomies) (Sahlins 1972). In economic exchange, goods and services have precise values agreed upon by all parties. These values allow for precise equivalences between items exchanged—a *price* arrived at through negotiation. In asymmetrical and diachronic reciprocity, by contrast, there are no precise values and thus no equivalences. The relationships created are ongoing diachronic relationships between people, not one-time relationships between commodities or services. Ending a reciprocal relationship is possible but fraught with potential social consequences (slights, offences, accusations of bad character, etc.).

Unlike economic exchange in which perceived parity is the goal, reciprocal exchange is often unequal; parity is not sought, nor is it possible since the things exchanged do not have discrete values (Seaford 1994). As a result, a reciprocal relationship can be maintained between radically unequal parties, for example, parents and children, patrons and clients, rulers and the ruled. The asymmetry of the exchange simply reinforces the asymmetry in material or social capital between the parties involved.

For example, in the patron/client relationship so important in the ancient Mediterranean, the client is the client precisely because she/he does not possess the capital necessary to be the patron—though he/she may be able to be a patron to a lesser client (this creates the nested networks characteristic of complex social hierarchies) (Saller 1982). Questions of what the patron actually gets from the client have often focused on things like support, honour, and praise (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984; Stewart 2010), but Zuiderhoek (2009) has shown that one of the most important things the patron receives is ratification, by the client, of the current social order and the patron's superior position in it. This tacit ratification of social inequality is far from trivial for the stability of steeply stratified and radically unequal societies, such as those of the ancient Mediterranean (Zuiderhoek 2009).

While specifics may be culturally variable, the basic tactics and strategies of reciprocity are innate in humans. The dynamics of reciprocity, and its difference from economic exchange, are best seen in the complex cultural norms of gift giving in a modern capitalist society. In a capitalist system *all* things can be reduced to capital. This creates significant tension with reciprocity, as separating gift giving from economic exchange requires tangible effort.

Consider the various technologies retailers have developed to do this: removable price tags, wish lists, gift receipts, gift cards, etc. In a capitalist system, cash would be the simplest and most efficient gift, but because the value of cash cannot be obfuscated, cash gifts play havoc with norms of reciprocity. Significant efforts are made by individuals and retailers to deal with this problem. Americans spent $200 billion on prepaid credit cards in 2014 alone, the majority of which were given as gifts (Groenfeldt 2014). From a practical standpoint, these cards incur costs that make no economic sense. The retailor has to make and distribute the card, as well as maintain a complex computer network to keep track of the balance. The consumer has to carry extra cards—each only able to

be used with one retailer—and keep track of their own balances. These cards regress to the very problems universal currency was invented to solve! However, even the extreme pressure of economic self-interest cannot alter social norms around gift giving. People buy these cards as gifts because they seem more appropriate, given the innate norms of reciprocity.

Practices of reciprocity were used to index, maintain, and negotiate complex social hierarchies in the ancient world, just as they do in the modern world. Indeed, reciprocity was far more important in the ancient Mediterranean since the society was less capitalistic. Since reciprocity was such a key part of the way ancient Mediterraneans related to each other, it was natural that these same practices articulated the way they imagined themselves to relate to non-obvious beings. Interactions with the gods were a projection of the basic patterns of human interaction. The gods did not need anything from humans, nor could they be crudely bribed, but they did respond to reciprocity. However, as in all reciprocity, the offering must fit the occasion, the god, and the giver. A few drops of wine might be an appropriate offering for a poor farmer praying for rain, but not for the Roman Senate praying for a great victory. Consider that a bauble of coloured pasta might be a lovely gift for a child to give a parent; it would not be a lovely gift for your rich neighbour to bring to your dinner party, but neither would a Ferrari. Then, as now, out-of-scale giving was greeted with suspicion and scorn (on this sentiment, see Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1120 and the comedies of Lucian of Samosata).

Reciprocity is never automatic, nor can it be directly enforced (Seaford 1994). The gods were complicated and mercurial, just like humans. Just as humans seek information about the motivations, intentions, and mental states of people in their social network (in order to better navigate relationships), ancient Mediterraneans sought indications of the will and mood of the gods. A whole range of culturally specific practices and personnel developed that promised to indicate the intentions of the gods in various circumstances, by various methods (Beard et al. 1998; Naiden 2013b; Struck 2014).

Rituals: Signals and 'Meaning'

What, if anything, is communicated by the practice of sacrifice? This question has been much debated in the history of ritual studies (Grimes 2014; Stephenson 2015). It was once common to see symbolic communication as a key element of ritual. Rituals were seen as enacted myths that communicated deep truths or values. This approach led to a fixation on meaning and the alleged *decoding* of rituals. Recent work has rejected this approach to ritual (Bell 1997; Boyer 2010) and symbol (Sperber 1975).

That said, humans are constantly scanning for information about the thoughts, intentions, and moods of people around them. They are, at the same time, aware that they are being scanned in the same way (Pyysiäinen 2009). Given this, *everything* observable that humans do is communication and potentially imbued with meaning, whether intentional or unintentional, genuine or deceptive. In this light, it would be absurd to

claim that conspicuous public actions like sacrifice do not communicate *anything*. The question is what exactly they do communicate.

Part of the debate here is a disparity over the way the term 'meaning' is used. When social scientists talk about the meaning of ritual, they often refer to very simple, even non-discursive concepts (on non-discursive action, see Schatzki 2002: 76–7). In the past, when religious studies scholars talked of meaning in ritual, they referred to explicit, discursive, theological concepts (e.g. the meaning of baptism is the washing away of original sin incurred by the fall of Adam). As a result, discussion of belief in ritual by social scientists often meets with a kneejerk response from religious studies scholars who see this as an antiquated approach. Indeed, discussion of belief by cognitive theorists of religion has at times provided a back door for antiquated, and often confessional, models of religion to return (see Bellah 2011). This, however, is rarer than some have claimed (Arnal and McCutcheon 2013). I will speak of sacrifice as communicating or *signalling* in the first, extremely limited sense.

In the majority of circumstances, witnessing someone performing a sacrifice would signal one basic thing to the observer: the actor believes that whatever non-obvious beings the sacrifice is being made to *actually exist*. This might seem too basic, but it is a significant signal. Communal sacrifice clearly plays a role in group formation, as Durkheim and others observed, if only because it signals a shared belief in the existence of some non-obvious being/beings. Constantly witnessing acts of sacrifice, from childhood on, particularly when those acts are performed by people with high social standing (parents and civic leaders), would certainly reinforce the reflective belief in the existence of the gods in question (Henrich 2009; Sosis 2003). This is significant in thinking about how sacrifice works socially to index groups and perpetuate social formations focused on non-obvious beings.

The non-discursive, embodied, nature of sacrifice is not a hindrance to this. Social psychologists have long noted that non-reflective behaviour can impact subsequent reflective attitudes and beliefs. In a classic example, the simple act of signing a petition can cause a significant post-facto shift in beliefs (Sosis 2003). This reality is reflected in the quip from Benjamin Franklin that getting an enemy to do you a favour could induce friendliness in that person. This is the basis of cognitive dissonance and self-perception theories, which suggest that when actions and attitudes are incongruent, one or the other will change; either beliefs will shift to fit the practice or the practice will be discontinued (Sosis 2003; Henrich 2009). This suggests that simply participating, unreflectively, in sacrifice (as a child, for example) would encourage later, reflective, belief in the existence of non-obvious beings, a reality already well appreciated by Plato (*Leg.* 10, 887d) and Augustine (*Conf.* 1.14).

Witnessing a person sacrificing might signal a belief in the existence of non-obvious beings, but it leaves a whole range of questions unanswered: What is their nature? How do they interact with humans? What must humans do to please them? None of this is clear from the act itself and is therefore open to debate. This debate would, perforce, involve discursive practices that are secondary to the act of sacrifice itself (Stowers 2011).

Discursive Meanings

Recent scholarship has shown that rituals are not a good medium for the communication of complex theological ideas (Boyer 2010). Ethnographic work has shown that participants in rituals often have little knowledge or interest in the 'official' meaning of a ritual, if one even exists (that is, if there is someone in a social position to lay claim to an 'official' meaning) (Whitehouse 2004). Participants often have no conception of a meaning at all; their accounts of meaning are post-facto reflections, which often occur only *after* prompting by the researcher (Staal 1979; Whitehouse 2004: 95–6). Participants in rituals normally rely on intuitive understanding of proper actions (what Schatzki calls 'practical mastery'), not complex discursive theologies or ideas of meaning (Schatzki 2002). Again, ritualization and reciprocity are innate; they do not require discursive commentary to be intelligible.

Debating the meaning of a ritual is not an interest of all ritual participants. Indeed, it appears to be something done only by specific people in specific circumstances (Stowers 2011). In most cases, persons engaging in such acts of interpretation are doing so for competitive reasons. It is important for scholars to recognize this competitive arena *as a competitive arena*, and to treat sources accordingly. Written texts are artefacts of this competition. A Roman text that talks about sacrifice does not represent some window into the 'true' meaning of sacrifice for Romans; it represents a claim to power—the authority to say what sacrifice is *supposed* to be or how it *ought* to be understood.

Debating the meaning and purpose of sacrifice was common in the ancient Mediterranean, and various parties (with various positions and motives) were involved (Ullucci 2012). For example, some philosophers questioned the nature of the gods and the universe; some priests debated correct ritual practices and appropriate signals of the gods' pleasure; and some satirists shaped an elite identity by caricaturing the beliefs and practices of the masses as superstitious and dim-witted.

It is important to note that this competition is taking place at a level removed from the actual practice of sacrifice. Discursive meanings are not present in the ritual itself, but rather arise from discursive acts that are secondary to the ritual. This is clearly shown by the various ancient groups that agreed on the actual practices of sacrifice but disagreed radically on what it did, what it meant, and how it worked (Ullucci 2012).

The discourse on sacrifice was, at times, closely related to the physical practices of making offerings. At other times, however, the discourse ranged far into symbolic and metaphorical realms (Eberhart 2011; see also Eberhart, Chapter 26 in this volume). As a result, the Greek, Latin, and Hebrew words often translated into English as 'sacrifice' have a range of indigenous meanings as varied as the current English usage of 'sacrifice'. Thus, 'sacrifice' was not a set category or ontological 'thing' in the ancient Mediterranean. It was a *competitive nexus* of ritualized practices and/or discursive meanings and interpretations.

Overview of Basic Offering Practices in the Ancient Mediterranean

Reciprocity with the gods was enacted in a myriad of physical settings and in an array of culturally specific forms. The aim of this overview is not to catalogue every instance but to give some of the common features of these offerings. For specifics on the rituals outlined below, see, for Greek material, Naiden (2013a), for Roman, Beard et al. (1998) and Rives (2010). For a broad overview, see Ekroth (2014).

The family and household were the basic social unit of the ancient Mediterranean. (That said, there were, particularly by the height of the Roman Empire, large civic populations living in apartment-style housing. How this affected their daily religious practice has not been well studied.) Offerings within the home reflected an array of hierarchical relationships among household members (cf. Dolansky, Chapter 10 in this volume). Sacrifice did not create these relationships in a strongly functionalist sense (except in a few cases); rather, the intuitive practices of sacrifice reflected the hierarchical norms and assumptions people carried.

Offerings at birth are one example of sacrifice that indexed family membership in this more functionalist sense. Birth offerings marked family membership—so much so that legal challenges to paternal inheritance often focused on who had witnessed the birth sacrifice, rather than attempts to prove biological descent, which was impossible prior to the 1980s (Jay 1992; Stowers 1995).

Beyond family membership, offerings in the home reflected and reinscribed the superior position of the male head of the household. Subordinate members (other men, women, children, slaves) stood in a relationship of asymmetrical reciprocity with the male head that was not unlike the imagined relationship between the male head and the gods. There was nothing they could really give him since he owned everything, including them. He mediated the interaction between the family and the gods.

Rather than focus on lists of rituals, festival dates, and specific traditions, it is most fruitful to imagine offering practices flowing organically and intuitively in lived lives. The gods had the power to affect the family, but they were not automatic blessing-dispensers. They had their own stories and their own interests in the form of narratives, which were largely oral. Human practices were shaped by these stories. Ideas about specific gods were often very local and these ideas shaped intuitive practices in the areas where such stories circulated. Stories often linked gods to certain geographic locations. Local gods were interested in local people and were imagined members of the social network (Christakis and Fowler 2011).

Narratives about the gods often linked them to specific human activities and natural phenomenon: farming, fishing, seafaring, plant and animal fertility, the weather, etc. Narratives also linked specific gods to human experiences that were particularly

dangerous or stressful such as childbirth, war, disease, and death (on narrative as fundamental to human social organization, see Zerubavel 2003).

It is important to stress that specific offering practices were not normally prescribed by these narratives. Oral stories about the gods rarely contained detailed ritual instructions. We can get a sense of these from modern comparanda as well as ancient texts like the Homerica and Genesis. Practices flowed intuitively from shared traditions ('knowledge') about the gods. Notions of which gods were effective in particular contexts would be considered important knowledge and would be sought out and debated. Particularly popular stories might spread specific ideas about specific gods over a wide area. The development of writing both aided and complicated this process of transmission. As the individual vicissitudes of a human life played out in the context of these ideas about the gods, offering practices were deployed strategically.

Beyond the family and the household, most of the same human concerns operated on the community/civic level, and thus community-wide offering practices mirror many of the same practices of the household. Every household in town would be worried about the barley harvest *at the same time*. They would all be interested in honouring the local gods of that area, they would all have dead relatives to mourn, and they would all celebrate a successful grape harvest together. Many of the civic festivals of ancient Mediterranean were focused on these communal concerns (Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel 1992; Beard et al. 1998).

Just as offering practices in the household reflected and reinscribed hierarchies and identifications, civic offerings did the same. Civic membership was indexed by participation in civic offerings (Jay 1992; Stowers 1995). Unequal relationships between families were indexed. A particularly powerful and wealthy family might sponsor lavish sacrifices on behalf of the whole city, thus displaying their status vis-à-vis other families and other cities.

Cities pool the resources of their populations and thus have comparatively greater means. A householder might make small grain and oil offerings in a household shrine, but a wealthy city, by pooling resources from many families, could erect a massive temple to a local god. This temple would be a source of civic pride in competition with other cities while at the same time fostering solidarity within the city. Because of the psychosocial process of costly signalling, such grand public displays were self-reinforcing. The more people saw the seriousness with which others, especially elites, treated the gods, the more likely they were to take the gods' existence and power seriously themselves (Sosis 2003).

People were also connected by other social networks, such as professional guilds. A shared profession meant shared concerns and interests; again, narratives often suggested that certain gods had particular interest in certain trades. Groups such as mystery cults and voluntary associations were social networks united simply by a desire to join (Burkert 1987; Kloppenborg and Wilson 1996). They advertised an array of material and metaphysical benefits, from a decent burial to Eleusis' vague promise of better hopes in death. Such cults often had unique rituals and a unique aesthetic, but most included offerings where the basic practices and logic of reciprocity were the same.

Social networks of the ancient Mediterranean at the trans-civic level were constantly being reordered by political and military factors in ways that affected offering practices. A new hegemon often meant additional new gods and temples at the civic level. This could be a top-down process where the gods of a new ruling power were installed in a conquered area (see Frankfurter's 1998 analysis of Egypt). While they lacked a scientific understanding of costly signalling, rulers were fully aware of the power of communal practices, like offerings, to reinforce hierarchies and encourage group identity formation. The ritual policies of Roman emperors like Decius and Julian, for example, showed a self-conscious attempt to unify the sprawling empire through shared practices (Rives 1999).

The process could also be bottom-up, where locals used their practical skills in reciprocity to strategically negotiate their own domination not simply to a distant ruling power but also to themselves (Frankfurter 1998). The Roman Imperial cult is an example of this (Price 1984).

Ancient Hebrew/Judean Offerings

This Handbook's focus on early Christianity justifies added attention to ancient Israelite/Judean offerings. That said, the practices of ancient Jews/Judeans were the same as those of the wider Mediterranean, with a few exceptions.

'Jew/Judean' was a recognized, emic, ethno-religious identity construct in the Roman period, used as a self-designation and as a label (Mason 2007). There are three elements associated with this identity that are relevant to offering practices: (1) devotion to a single god; (2) a centralized cult site; and (3) a collection of sacred texts.

1. The notion that Judeans only worshipped their own god was common. This meant that unlike the broad range of non-obvious beings who were the focus of acts of reciprocity in other contexts, many Judeans would only make offerings to Yahweh. The logic, motivations, occasions, and reasons for these offerings, however, were identical. Judeans worried about harvests, childbirth, and diseases. They went on sea voyages, and they experienced war and death just like everyone else.

   Although there were cultural taboos on a few things (e.g. pig), *in toto,* Judean offerings were similar to those in the wider Mediterranean: incense, grains, produce, oil, wine, animals. Participation in these practices mirrored and reinscribed the same social hierarchies within Judean cities and families as in the rest of the Mediterranean.
2. The centralization of offerings to Yahweh in Jerusalem in the first millennium BCE was unusual in the ancient Mediterranean. (This centralization was, of course, an act of power, and a good example of sacrifice as a competitive nexus.) For Judeans who lived far from Jerusalem, offering practices would have been significantly affected. For some, pilgrimage to Jerusalem may have been frequent, but not for most. Other temples did exist at different times, but this did not materially alter

the situation. Various practices evolved in response to this, including monetary offerings sent to Jerusalem and alternate communal practices (Rosenblum 2013).

Centralization was also significant because the Jerusalem Temple was twice destroyed—first by the Babylonians in 586 BCE and then again by the Romans in 70 CE, after which it was never rebuilt. The absence of the Temple required creative rethinking of reciprocity (Sandwell 2007). We have evidence of this in the texts of the Rabbis (starting *c.*200 CE) who rethink worship in the absence of the Temple (Klawans 2006).

3. Ancient Judean identity, by the Roman period, was also associated with a collection of texts, some of which give explicit instructions about when, where, and how to make offerings to Yahweh. We have nothing quite analogous from other ancient Mediterranean cults. Nevertheless, the texts are not systematic, and the descriptions are too vague to reconstruct the full details of a ritual (Smith 1987). Furthermore, most of the instructions for offerings and sacrifices refer to a period (perhaps mythic) when offerings were made at a portable tabernacle. It is unclear how these proscriptions were enacted in the Jerusalem Temple. Later Rabbinic material contains extended discussion of offering practices, but these texts come from the period after the Temple's destruction in 70 CE. It is unclear how much the Rabbinic authors actually knew about the workings of the real Temple. Their writings are more likely to be ideologically prescriptive than historically descriptive.

The existence of the Hebrew Bible has had a distorting effect on many scholarly reconstructions of Judean practice, which tend to privilege the voice of the text as normative and descriptive in matters of offerings. What percentage of Judeans conformed to the Bible's proscriptions in any given period or place is unknown. Which practices constituted Judean identity were, thus, contested, as we should expect.

Early Christian Offerings

It is often assumed that Jesus rejected sacrifice and that this rejection was part of the original kernel of Christianity. The evidence, however, points in another direction. Given the absolute ubiquity of offering practices in the ancient Mediterranean, we should assume continuity until evidence proves otherwise. A rejection of physical offerings is simply not present in the earliest Christian texts. Paul, for example, speaks against offerings to Greek and Roman gods (as we would expect of a Judean) (1 Cor. 8, 10; Rom. 1), but he says nothing against the Temple cult in Jerusalem.

The New Testament gospels never have Jesus explicitly reject physical offerings. While they never portray him directly making an offering, they do portray him instructing others to do so (Mark 1:40–4 and par.) and Jesus does participate indirectly, by eating a sacrifice. The last supper in the synoptic gospels is a Passover meal of sacrificed lamb. Jesus and his followers are said to eat 'the Passover (*to pascha*)' on the day '*to pascha* is sacrificed' (Mark 14:12–14 and parr.). Bible translations often obfuscate this reality

by arbitrarily using different words to translate *to pascha* in the same sentence (e.g. the NRSV). The Book of Acts also imagines Paul participating in sacrifice *after* the resurrection and after his 'conversion' (21:23–6; 24:17–18). If the historical Jesus rejected sacrifice, the gospel authors are unaware of it—strongly suggesting that the rejection is, in fact, a later tradition (Ullucci 2012).

By the second century, virulent rejection of sacrifice is a common element in many Christian texts. The Letter to the Hebrews (*c*.100) appears to be the earliest example (Eisenbaum 2013). However, we should not, as a rule, assume that such texts speak for all Christians. Both Christian texts themselves and archaeological evidence show that some Christians went on making physical offerings long after others rejected them.

Christians made physical offerings (sacrifices) to saints, martyrs, and the dead in a variety of contexts. Texts give evidence of such practices in the very act of condemning them. See, for example, Augustine *Conf*. 6.2 and Epiphanius *Haer*. 79. The archaeological record confirms this. Christian tombs and shrines often contain depictions of banquets, areas for offerings, and even tubes that allowed offerings to be introduced directly into the burial chamber. The cult of Paul on the *via Ostiense* outside Rome is a good example (Eastman 2011). These remains are directly analogous to what we see in non-Christian funerary contexts where offerings were the norm (Belayche 2005; Jensen 2008; MacMullen 2009).

This evidence has not been properly integrated into our models of early Christianity. It shows that the intuitive nature of reciprocal offerings was strong—so strong that the growing Christian ecclesiastical hierarchy, which rejected such offerings, had to expend significant effort in attempts to curtail it. The decline of major civic sacrifice in the Roman Empire in the late fourth century shows that they were successful. However, their persistent battles over offerings at shrines and tombs shows that they were not *completely* successful (Trout 1995; Shoemaker 2008; MacMullen 2009).

Discourse about Offerings in the Ancient Mediterranean

'Correct' Praxis

The basic practices of offerings were largely consistent across the ancient Mediterranean. These included burning offerings, pouring out liquid offerings, and depositing votives at sacred sites. There were, however, significant local and cult-specific variations in the particulars, including: times, types of offerings (animal, vegetable, oil, wine), sex and colour of animals, animal parts offered, quantities, bodily movement, dress, prayer, music, smells, overall aesthetics, etc.

Ancient texts sometimes preserve debates over correct practice, and we should expect that these questions were lively topics for cultic personnel and even private individuals who wanted to be sure their acts of reciprocity would be well received. The writers of these texts are often motivated by a desire to take a stand on correct praxis and are therefore often quite explicit and polemical, but the issues at stake are often the details, not the main practices themselves (Stowers 2011).

There were some, however, who questioned the basic practices and urged change. Pythagoreanism, for example, was associated with vegetarianism and a rejection of animal sacrifice. The third-century philosopher Porphyry argued that animals must not be eaten and must not be offered (Marx-Wolf 2016). The slightly later Iamblichus argued for a hierarchy of offerings that fitted his cosmic hierarchy of divine beings. To lower gods, physical offerings were suitable, but to the highest gods, only immaterial 'offerings' of prayer and praise were appropriate (Marx-Wolf 2016). Some early Christians argued that Jesus was the perfect sacrifice that replaced all others.

It is important to note that these different writers had very different idiosyncratic rationales for rejecting sacrifice. Christianity does not represent a culmination of anti-sacrificial traditions, but simply another voice (Ullucci 2012). Groups that rejected offerings remained conspicuous, but very small, until the dominance of Christianity in the fourth century.

In focusing on continuity, I do not intend to further marginalize dissenters or diminish the great diversity of cult- and location-specific variations. These were certainly significant to the people involved. However, the basic practices of burning, pouring out, and depositing were relatively constant for the vast majority. Like staple foods that could be prepared in a hundred ways, basic offering practices were always open to local variation, as well as to improvisation and adaptation in response to historical events and lived lives.

'Correct' Interpretation

Agreement on praxis, of course, did not mean agreement on interpretation. As noted above, the act of offering leaves a lot unspecified. As a result, participants in the same practice could radically disagree about the meaning of the act, its purpose, or what physical or metaphysical states must accompany it.

Debating the meaning and purpose of offerings was a lively field of competition in the ancient Mediterranean. The radically different views offered by different groups illustrate just how open to interpretation the act was. Various philosophical schools offered idiosyncratic interpretations based on their idiosyncratic theological and cosmological models (Ullucci 2012). Debating sacrifice was also a prominent theme in tragedy, comedy, and satire (Graf 2011; Naiden 2013b). Many of these texts claim that correct beliefs are critical to correct offerings and accuse some people of holding *incorrect* beliefs. We should not take these texts as descriptive of the real beliefs of any particular group, but as *competitive polemic*.

Lucian of Samosata, for example, caricatures people who think they can buy the gods' goodwill with lavish sacrifices, in other words, people who think sacrifice is a form of economic exchange. He attempts to create an elite identity by castigating *hoi polloi* as laughably ignorant, profligate, and impious in their offering practices (Graf 2011). Lucian is not trying to abolish sacrifice, he is simply using it competitively and polemically.

Several texts from the Hebrew Bible fit into this same model (Klawans 2006; Ullucci 2012). These texts are not calling for an end to the Temple cult; they are simply claiming that reciprocity with Yahweh is complicated. Yahweh will not ignore grave transgressions of moral or religious laws simply because you bring him sacrifice. Again, this should not be taken as evidence that some people thought he *would*. Rather, these passages reflect the recurring theological model in the Hebrew Bible: Yahweh is more powerful than the gods of other peoples, but Yahweh's people often do not live up to his standards (i.e. they behave immorally, they worship other gods, they do not follow cultic laws, etc.). This failure results in Yahweh removing his protection, which results in conquest by other peoples (even though their gods are weaker). This is a competitive model that stresses not simply the superiority of Yahweh over other gods but the power of the religious elites (who wrote the texts) in ensuring the prosperity of the group.

These examples of competition over the meaning, purpose, and efficacy of offerings show the way discursive interpretation is parasitic upon non-discursive ritual actions (Stowers 2011). Various parties could compete vociferously on points of meaning, but still perform the same practices. Doers of the practices might, at various times, be interested in various discursive models, but they are not *necessary* for the practice. Most ancient Mediterraneans were not engaged in this competition and likely paid no mind to those who were.

Symbolic and Metaphorical 'Sacrifice'

Since offerings were such an important part of the lives of ancient Mediterraneans, it is not surprising that the terms and concepts of offerings would be deployed metaphorically. (Consider how common metaphors based on money are in a capitalist society.)

Metaphors can be based on homologies with actual practices, such as giving, slaughtering, burning, pouring out, or eating. Alternatively, symbolic interpretations can expand to the point that the metaphor has no connection at all with actual practices. Symbolic and metaphorical creativity is limitless. The best example of this is the Christian interpretation of the crucifixion of Jesus—an event that has almost no similarity with sacrifice whatsoever—as not simply *a* sacrifice but *the* paradigmatic sacrifice. Like all metaphors and symbols, calling Jesus' crucifixion a sacrifice not only altered the meaning of that event, it widened the symbolic range of the term sacrifice itself, pushing it in new and different directions and opening the door to further metaphoric and symbolic expansion (to the Eucharist, for example).

Metaphors are always strategic in that they pull two things into connection for some purpose. Referring to human death as metaphorical sacrifice was common in Greek tragedy, where the purpose was to depict sacrifice gone wrong (Henrichs 2012; Naiden 2013b). In the Roman period, the murder of political figures was sometimes referred to metaphorically as sacrifice to heighten the status of the victim (Várhelyi 2011; for other examples, see Feeney 2004; Boustan 2011; Boustan and Reed 2008). The term 'human sacrifice' itself is a metaphor, not an analytic category, although scholars have often wrongly used it as one (Ullucci 2015).

It has often been argued that metaphorical use of sacrificial terms implied a critique of sacrifice, the assumption being that the crafter of the metaphor is implying that something else is a *truer* or *better* 'sacrifice' than sacrifice (Petropoulou 2008; Eberhart 2011). While it is certainly true that metaphor can be used in this way, it is equally obvious that this is not always the case. (Saying my students are bright does not imply a critique of light or light bulbs.) Because sacrifice is not an ontological thing, but a conceptual category created by defining it, the lines between definition and metaphor are potentially blurry. There was an ongoing competition in the ancient world to define what 'real' sacrifice was. It can be hard to distinguish metaphorical uses of sacrifice from attempts to redefine the term, and this is a point of scholarly contention (Klawans 2006; Petropoulu 2008; Ullucci 2012). For example, when Paul calls Jesus a sacrifice, he likely means it metaphorically, but when Cyprian calls the Eucharist a sacrifice he is making a definitional claim (the Eucharist *really is* a sacrifice, the *only real* sacrifice), not crafting a metaphor.

Conclusion

This chapter has used a second-order analytic definition of sacrifice to delineate a focus of scholarly analysis. In the ancient Mediterranean, however, 'sacrifice' was already a contested nexus of practice and discourse. To approach sacrifice as a concept, the scholar must keep in mind both the messy, practical, non-discursive world of offerings in lived lives, as well as the discursive, competitive world of texts and experts. These worlds interact, but should not be conflated.

Acknowledgements

I thank the volume editors for this opportunity, Jessica Pesce and Susan Dunsmore for editing, and Joey Carton for research assistance and editing.

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CHAPTER 17

PILGRIMAGE AND FESTIVALS

LAURA FELDT

Definition, Theory, Approaches

This section discusses key definitional and theoretical issues in the literature on ancient pilgrimage and festivals, outlining key approaches and discussions. The section argues in favour of broad concepts as a necessary prerequisite for cross-cultural comparison, and suggests avenues for theoretical development, especially with regard to spatiality theory.

Issues of Definition

The research interest for the subject of pilgrimage and festivals is vibrant in several disciplines, although relatively new for the ancient world with major studies appearing especially from the 1990s onwards (Bremmer 2016: 1). While understandings and definitions of pilgrimage and festivals differ within the disciplines, discussion of theory and definitions is crucial and constitutive within the perspective of the comparative history of religions, the disciplinary basis of this chapter, as it is for any cross-disciplinary discussion. First, this chapter will discuss relevant theoretical understandings of pilgrimage and festivals, and then it will survey the most prominent types of pilgrimage and festivals in the ancient Mediterranean ritual world from ancient Near Eastern examples, Graeco-Roman forms, to Jewish and early Christian types.

The conceptual and definitional problems involved in gathering together a cluster of ritual phenomena known from a vast area and several centuries, and studied across the disciplinary boundaries of ancient history, classical philology, biblical scholarship, church history, anthropology, and the history of religions, and which involves big questions of continuity and change in religion between ancient polytheisms, Judaisms, and Christianities, are legion, and have sparked heated discussions over definitions and disciplinary boundaries. Pilgrimages and festivals are, moreover, religious practices

with fuzzy borders to tourism, warfare, migration, and trade (Coleman 2015), and some prefer precise definitions while others focus on continuities between related phenomena. In classical studies in particular, the concept of pilgrimage has been criticized and it has been suggested that the terms pilgrimage and pilgrim are not apt, perhaps even harmful, for the periods before Late Antiquity, also in the absence of emic terms (Graf 2002; Bremmer 2016). Against this, it can be argued that the continued discussion and refinement of cross-cultural comparative concepts are essential not only for historians of ancient religions (indeed, religion in any form), but also for cross-disciplinary conversations. We need concepts to analyse, experiment, and compare, and thereby gain a deeper understanding of the cultures we study, and of the general, human phenomenon of 'religion'. Even when those concepts fail or fit less well, we need them in order to discuss and refine our approaches, as also stressed by Bremmer (2016).

Pilgrimage and festivals designate a set of ritual practices with fuzzy boundaries, both placed at the intersection of religion, space, and travel (Harland 2011: 5). This contribution understands pilgrimage as a ritualized journey by a person or persons to a destination ascribed religious power (e.g. a place, an object, a person) (see here Frank 2008: 826–7), often involving a bodily performance of devotion for religious purposes and the bringing home of religious objects or souvenirs. The religious purposes of the journey may be summed up as '*orationis causa*', for the sake of prayer, meaning that participation functions, and is performed as, a medium of access to religious power; e.g. for the potential effectiveness of prayer, for healing, protection, salvation, or changes of identity and status, often bolstered by fantastic narratives (Feldt 2012a). Religious festivals may be understood as an umbrella term covering a variety of larger, ritual events in the ancient world, encompassing the performance of rites for the duration of at least one day, and involving a large number of participants, often travelling guests, from a catchment area (Harland 2011: 3–6).

Both pilgrimage and festivals demonstrate the key role of materiality and the senses in religion, as well as the ever-central roles of the body and narrative. Previous definitions of pilgrimage have stressed 'religious motivation' and 'life-enriching experience' as key in understanding pilgrimage (Bremmer 2016), that pilgrimages are journeys involving the seeking of a 'sacred destination' and an 'experience of the divine' (Whalen 2011: xi), or that the pilgrim travels to 'a place or state that he or she believes to embody a sacred ideal' (Morinis 1992: 4), or have simply understood pilgrimage as 'sacralized mobility' (Coleman 2015). Yet, motivation, intent, belief, and experience are difficult terms to use in analyses of sources for ancient religions, while sacralized mobility as a term may be found too broad. On the one hand, the definition of pilgrimage and festival participation outlined above indeed stresses the importance of noting the continuities and fuzzy boundary areas between forms of religious travel at different scales—from brief visits to the local shrine, or participation in local festivals, to major, transformational journeys to places of religious power or festivals with large catchment areas—and between pilgrimage and ancient religious festivals as ritual events. Yet, on the other hand it agrees with those scholars who find too strong a stress on the beliefs, motivations, and religious purposes of an individual problematic (Elsner and Rutherford 2007: 3–5).

While it is often productive to keep the boundaries fuzzy, the analytical value of the concepts must still be demonstrated vis-à-vis the sources in each case.

Key Theoretical Approaches

Key theoretical approaches to pilgrimage and festivals have often followed disciplinary boundaries from history, cultural geography, and sociology, to anthropology and the comparative study of religions (Coleman 2015). Still, one of the most seminal works across the board is Victor and Edith Turner's *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (1978), which provided the outline of a comparative, theoretical approach and key models that have been widely used. They saw pilgrimage as sharing key characteristics with rites of passage in tribal societies by involving a removal of a person or a group from everyday social frames, a testing, liminal phase, and a readmission to the group with a new status or a transformation in identity. During the testing experience, the pilgrims enter the realm of *communitas* or anti-structure, relating to each other without the constraints of normal social relationships, thus enabling new identities, reflection, and status changes. Pilgrimage differs from rites of passage by commonly being voluntary, sharing this feature with cultural practices such as art, theatre, and sports, and by being related to a centre 'out there'. The analytical power of the Turners' model has been widely recognized, but also criticized for being less applicable to local, routine forms of pilgrimage, for downplaying the control of religious authorities over the ritual activities, and for emphasizing ideals of unity and egalitarianism over contestation and conflicts observed in practice. Another key strand in research is represented by John Eade and Michael Sallnow, who have contributed with ethnographic case studies and important new understandings of pilgrimage sites as sites of contestation and negotiation between different perspectives, and of power struggles between groups with differing interests—laypeople, ritual specialists, locals, visitors, and different sub-groups within a religion (Eade and Sallnow 1991). Researchers have also called attention to how pilgrimage centres play a role in shaping regional identities. Thus, David Frankfurter (1998) has demonstrated how pilgrimage can function as a means to engage religious groups in the Christianization of a landscape. The literary qualities of pilgrimage writings, and their value as sources for religious imaginations, norms, and expectations, have also been a seminal and key topic of interest (Leyerle 1996; Elsner 2000; Frank 2000; Jacobs 2004). This research trend marks an important watershed for its stress on the literary sources for pilgrimage as performative media, which shaped audiences' religious perceptions, rather than as straightforward descriptions of past events.

Avenues of Theoretical Development

More recent analyses of pilgrimage and religious festivals in the ancient world can connect with broader, theoretical research trends in the study of religion, anthropology, and

in studies of modern forms of pilgrimage, as related to media studies, migration, cognitive approaches, aesthetics of religion, spatial theory, and materiality studies (Knott 2005; Tweed 2006; Meyer 2008; 2012; Bynum 2011; Grieser 2015; Feldt 2016; 2017; Uro 2016). A deeper engagement between these research trends and ancient materials will no doubt prove fruitful. Steps in the direction of a more thorough engagement with material culture have been taken recently by Kristensen in his work on ancient pilgrimage (Kristensen 2012; Kristensen and Friese 2016). An engagement with cognitive theories of ritual remains to be developed, but the potential for analysis in terms of Whitehouse's imagistic mode of religiosity (Whitehouse 2004), in terms of the idea of commitment costly rituals (Sosis and Alcorta 2003; Bulbulia and Sosis 2011), and in terms of the building-block approach to religious experience (Taves 2009), is clear to see. Insights from ritual theory, in combination with theoretical input from theories of aesthetics, spatiality, materiality, and cognition, will no doubt prove fruitful in further studies of ancient pilgrimage and festivals. Spatiality theory, with its distinctions between material space, designed space, and lived space can offer new analytical strategies for distinguishing between the geophysical aspects of pilgrimage and festival spaces, the ideal, imagined spaces involved, and the experiences of social space as lived and practised (Feldt 2016: 88–9). The aesthetics of religion is a new research trend which can aid our understanding of pilgrimages and festivals as multisensory events and highlight the work on the senses and the body, from the impact of colours, shapes, sounds, and flavours to space and kinaesthetic movement (Grieser 2015; Grieser and Johnston 2017). Comparative angles on, and comparative theoretical discussion of, the subject of ancient pilgrimage and festivals are vital today as a key part of the development of early Christian ritual studies as a field. As Risto Uro stresses, the role of ritual in the emergence of Christianity is a topic in need of more research, as ritual practices are key factors in the consolidation and transmission of religious ideology, values, and beliefs to new generations (2016: 1–2, 10), i.e. for the transmission of any religion across time. Material forms of mediation are also key in such processes (Meyer 2008; 2012), just as fantastic, titillating narratives about visions, healings, miracles, prayers, etc. (Feldt 2017) at the pilgrimage site are important factors in the maintenance of the status of the site. Narratives of pilgrimage and festival participation also influence religious identity formation and transmission across generations.

Similar Religious Practices

Pilgrimage and festivals resemble other forms of ritual practices, religious forms of travel, as well as mysticism, meditation, and cultural practices such as tourism (Stausberg 2010). Many theorists of pilgrimage and festivals find it important to stress the continuities. The temporary release from everyday social frames is shared by several types of travellers—pilgrims, tourists, mystics, and participants in festivals. Some tourists may be strongly affected by places of cultural and social power, in ways similar to pilgrims, while others may visit large religious festivals of others for touristic purposes

only. Mystics may testify to travelling religiously without travelling physically in ways that may resemble some forms of pilgrimage, and some forms of natural space—for instance, wildernesses—may provide material anchors for new pilgrimage sites (Turner 2005). Yet, for all the materiality and physicality of pilgrimage and festivals, no pilgrimage or festival site can endure without the multitude of official *and* unofficial, authoritative *and* popular narratives of fantastic encounters, visions, apparitions, magic, and healings, which help build up, support, and sometimes contest and change, the renown, and authority of a pilgrimage, festival site or religious space (Feldt 2012a).

A Survey of Forms of Pilgrimage and Festivals in the Ancient Mediterranean Ritual World

The Ancient Near East

As early as the third millennium BCE, in ancient Mesopotamia, we find examples of religious journeys and ritual gatherings for which the concepts of pilgrimage and festivals may be discussed. The account of Gudea of Lagaš' famous journey from his home town to the temple of the goddess Nanše in Isin may be mentioned, just as the mythic accounts of the visits of deities to other deities in other towns, like that of the visit of the moon god Nanna-Suen to Enlil in Nippur and other Old Babylonian examples, may indeed plausibly reflect how statues of deities were taken, by kings, on sacred journeys to visit each other at special times (Bottéro 1987; Beaulieu 2004). During some forms of the Akitu festival, the deity at the centre of the celebrations was ritually re-located to a sanctuary outside the city walls, in the ideological location of the steppe. In the first millennium, the Akitu festival of Babylon involved the ritual travel of other deities, with their personnel, to Marduk in the capital, and would attract participants from a larger catchment area. The festival itself involved processions and the movement of both celebrants and deities over the course of its twelve-day duration (Bidmead 2004). In ancient Egypt, much of the ritual life in the temples was centred on the king as the son of the incarnated creator god Re. The king functioned as priest, landowner, and warlord. As in ancient Mesopotamia, the Egyptian temple was the home of the god, and the abode of the principal cult statue. Daily rituals for a god in its temple were carried out, and involved many ritual actions, but comparatively little cultic personnel. Special festivals were also held, involving some or all of the population of the cities and regions, during which the deities could be seen, when the statue of the god would leave the temple. For the festival of Opet, the statue and shrine of the god Amun-Re were transported from the Karnak temple, and transported by river to the Luxor temple, and later returned. Other, large ritual events of Amun-Re are recorded at the Luxor and Karnak temples, while the mortuary temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu contains records of the festival processions

of Min and Sokar illustrated in great detail (Lesko 2005). Among the Hittites, as in the other, polytheistic, ancient Near Eastern religions, the temple cult, with the statues of the deities at the centre, was important. Texts describing the cultic calendar show the detailed ritual practices revolving around the statues in the temples. The statues could be transported around. On festival days, the statue was adorned and transported to a meadow outside the city, where it was venerated and entertained. It was customary for the king to visit towns to take part in festivals in honour of various deities, and in some festivals the participation of the king was mandatory (Lebrun 1987). Knowledge of Cana'anite/Ugaritic festivals (which does not rely on the negative evidence of the Hebrew Bible) and the yearly ritual activities and ritual calendar is not ample, but the Ugaritic texts do describe an organized temple cult under the patronage of the king, of a type well known from the ancient Near East, involving some larger ritual events. Some texts describe a major festival involving all of the people and elaborate rituals for the protection of the land from enemies (Hoffner 2005).

In the ancient Near Eastern polytheistic religions, the more important deities are town-gods. In the major urban centres of a region, particular deities 'preside' as lords and ladies of those towns or cities. The god of the capital city rules not only over his own city, but over the entire region—like Ptah in Memphis or Marduk in Babylon. Aspects of both unity and diversity, and a hierarchy of centre and periphery, are important in the political and geographical aspects of festivals and religious travel across ancient polytheisms, where some cult centres did attract periodical visits from the citizens of different towns and regions (Assmann 2004).

The Graeco-Roman World

The understanding of pilgrimage and types of festivals in the Graeco-Roman world is contested. Some scholars of ancient Greek and Roman religions argue that the concept of pilgrimage should not be used of short journeys to local shrines or the yearly participation in festivals (Bremmer 2016: 6), and perhaps not at all in Graeco-Roman contexts (Graf 2002). Here, I survey some of the principal forms of ritual practices which *could* fall under this heading as a guide to further discussion and analysis. A broad range of ritual types existed in different regions and times. The sources are mainly literary and epigraphical (Frankfurter 1998; Elsner and Rutherford 2007: 10–27; but see Kristensen 2012; Kristensen and Friese 2016, for discussion of archaeological evidence), and encompass both ritual travel with a large and a small catchment area (the entire Greek world, or a local area), ritual activities of special professions, one-off visits to sanctuaries and regular practices, the attendance of festivals, and the seeking out of supernatural assistance for healing or other purposes.

A variety of festivals involving gods attracted panhellenic and/or regional travellers (Rutherford 1998; Harland 2011: 1–26). A major form of religious travel in classical Greece was the state-delegation (*theōria*), which travelled between cities and witnessed or participated in ritual activities in the cities they visited. In Hellenistic times, *theōriai*

were sent to sanctuaries in other cities to participate in festivals, accompanied by private citizens, and some sanctuaries came to be panhellenic in scope (Elsner and Rutherford 2007: 12–14). For all periods of classical antiquity, oracle consultations were a common form of religious travel, sometimes involving incubation, and from the Hellenistic period (fourth century) onwards, religious travel to obtain healing is better attested (Elsner and Rutherford 2007: 14–17). Other forms of religious travel involved the participation in initiatory rites, e.g. at the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis (and elsewhere), visits to local shrines within a city-state, and visits to famous cultural landmarks such as battlefields (Elsner and Rutherfod 2007: 17–21; Harland 2011: 7). Several interesting types of religious travel and festivals appear in Graeco-Roman Hellenistic Egypt, from visitors to festivals, more tourist-like travellers, to travellers seeking healing (especially from Asklepios) or guidance (especially from Apollo) (Elsner and Rutherford 2007: 22–4; Harland 2011: 8–11). Factual or fictional, literary narratives of religious travel or pilgrimage are another important source of information, which had important rhetorical functions for their readers, framing them as surrogate travellers or pilgrims (Elsner 1992; 1997). This is a genre which likely impacted the early Christian religious world in important ways. Less central for the topic of pilgrimage and festivals, but worthy of mention in relation to religion, space, and travel are travelling philosophers, holy men, cult founders, and other mobile figures who promoted their gods and a semi-ritualized, itinerant way of life (Harland 2011: 11–17).

In Roman Italy, many types of festivals were celebrated, from torch races, games, dances, theatrical shows, to processions, sacrifices, 'holy journeys', and banquets. Some of these included participants from a regional catchment area, although numbers are difficult to gauge (Rüpke and Schilling 2005; Brandt and Iddeng 2012; Rüpke 2012). Several centres of religious travel are known, e.g. the Alban Mount, Lake Nemi, Fregellae, the grove of Helernus, and others, but 'pilgrimage' (if applicable) seemingly plays a lesser role than in Greek religion (Elsner and Rutherford 2007: 24), and the Romans did not have a term for religious travel resembling pilgrimage (Bremmer 2016: 5). The forms of Roman ritual travel, which can be discussed under the heading of pilgrimage, have been catalogued by Elsner and Rutherford (2007). In the late third century BCE, some Roman interest in sanctuaries in Greece and elsewhere begins. Elsner and Rutherford count also the symbolic pilgrimage of emperors, a complex form of intellectual pilgrimage by members of the elite in the period of the Second Sophistic, and new forms of religious regional and 'panhellenic' travel (Elsner and Rutherford 2007: 23–6), as well as, in the Hellenistic period, forms of regional pilgrimage (Elsner and Rutherford 2007: 26–7). The status of Rome as one of the most powerful urban centres of the ancient world must be taken into account when considering the Roman evidence. Roman festivals were extraordinary events, but their purpose was the maintenance of *pax deorum* and the support of the gods, and so they played a part in the maintenance of cultural and social order. The interaction between the realms of the religious and the political, between the sacred and the secular, is relevant in several ways. Changes in the way Roman festivals were celebrated, and the introduction of new elements or cults, can regularly be connected to the political and social transformations of Rome. Spectacles, fairs, and

entertainment were also fundamental to most festivals, and yet the reverence for deities and rites was great, and the interaction with entertainment and politics evidently strengthened devotion (as suggested in the contributions by Burkert, Bouvrie, and Rüpke in Brandt and Iddeng 2012).

The Hebrew Bible and Judaism in the Second Temple Period

The Hebrew Bible mentions several local sanctuaries, to which pilgrimages were made (Bethel, Gilgal, Shilo, Dan, Be'ersheva, and Jerusalem), and several texts contain references to pilgrimages (1 Sam. 1; 1 Kgs 17; Hos. 4:15; Amos 4:4; 5:5), but the pilgrimages to the temple in Jerusalem, or the Jerusalem festivals in which participation is required according to the Torah (Exod. 23:14–19; 34:18, 22–3; Lev. 23:4–44; Deut. 16:1–17), are by far the best known: The festival of *maṣṣot* or Pesaḫ in the spring in connection with the barley harvest (Passover); *Šāvuôt* in connection with the wheat harvest (Pentecost), also in the springtime; and *Sukkôt* (Tabernacles) in connection with the harvest of fruit and the New Year in the autumn (Bokser 1992; Wilken 1992: 105–8). According to the Torah, all Jewish men were obliged to attend these festivals in the temple in Jerusalem, and special psalms (*šîrēy hamma^{a}lôt*) were connected with them. Even if this obligation was only partially fulfilled, pilgrimage would have factored importantly in the local economy. According to 2 Kings 23, the historicity of which is questionable (Davies 2014), King Josiah cleansed the Jerusalem temple of ritual objects and types of worship which he deemed illegitimate, and he desacralized a number of sanctuaries elsewhere, in order to raise the status of the Jerusalem temple and enhance its power, as the only place in which Yahweh could be worshipped. Even if, according to Jer. 41:4–6, the temple of Jerusalem maintained its status as a centre of pilgrimage also after the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 587, the more likely scenario is that the large pilgrimage festivals to Jerusalem were fully developed after the exile, in the Second Temple period, and that all festivals involved animal sacrifice. According to Philo of Alexandria, pilgrims travelled to Jerusalem from many regions by the late Second Temple period. Other sources reveal that forms of sacred travel were not limited to Jerusalem in the Second Temple and rabbinic periods, as pilgrimage to centres in Egypt like Elephantine and Heliopolis, as well as to synagogues, are attested (Kerkeslager 1998). In addition to the Elephantine evidence, the Samaritan and Qumran communities also attest to Jewish festivals in the Second Temple period. The Samaritans offered a Passover sacrifice according to the stipulations of Exod. 12, but adapted to the Deuteronomic centralization, which they took to refer to Mount Gerizim, and observed the festival with pageantry. References to Jewish festivals are also found in The Wisdom of Solomon, Philo, Josephus, and Pseudo-Philo. Philo and Josephus focus especially on the celebratory nature of Pesach as a form of national thanksgiving, and mention a multitude of pilgrims to Jerusalem, the great number of sacrifices, and the music (Bokser 1992). In addition to the pilgrimages stipulated in the Torah, Jewish pilgrimages to the tombs of the patriarchs, the prophets,

or other biblical sites, are attested in the Second Temple and early Christian periods (Maraval 2002).

Early Christian Pilgrimage and Festivals

The beginnings and key characteristics of early Christian pilgrimage are difficult to survey. As seen in the New Testament, the Jesus followers also went to the Jerusalem temple to pray, attend major festivals, and to worship (Acts 3:1; 21:6). However, traces of a critique of the sacralization of places as unnecessary in the new movement can also be noticed (Matt. 23:29; John 4:21; Acts 7:47–9). In the second and third centuries, especially in the Greek-speaking world, the tendency to see Christianity as a religion not requiring temples, altars, or other places of worship is found in some Christian writers, who also frame it as differing from Judaism and polytheistic religions (Maraval 2002: 64). Also, later Christian writers wrote vigorous attacks on the practice of pilgrimage, warning against dangers en route, from moral mischief to sexual misconduct (Coleman and Elsner 1995: 80). In other sources and other strands within early Judaeo-Christian groups in the second and third centuries, we find traces of a reverential interest in places of memory, as in the stories of the tomb (Mark 16:6), in references to the Mount of Olives and the site of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem (Maraval 2002: 65). With the growth of the cult and mythology of the martyrs in the second and third centuries, clearer signs of more profound changes towards the sacralization of places and persons are seen. The martyr's tombs gradually become the sites of extended rituals and funerary banquets, and the bodily remains of the martyrs were venerated. In the late second century, Christian leaders from Asia Minor travelled to places associated with biblical events (Hunt 1999; Whalen 2011: 1–44). Apart from such traces of earlier beginnings, Christian pilgrimage was fuelled by the authorization and promotion of Christianity in the fourth century and flourished primarily afterwards (Frank 2008: 827; Whalen 2011). Constantine and his mother actively promoted Christian sacralization of space at sites connected with Jesus' life, and soon the growth of an industry of hostels, hospices, and monasteries along the route of sites is attested. Traditional sacred centres of healing also attracted Christians and some were rededicated to Christian saints (Maraval 2004: 275; Frank 2008: 827).

As defined by Georgia Frank, early Christian pilgrimage involved travelling to a place for the purpose of obtaining access to sacred power, whether that power was ascribed to spaces, persons, or objects. The motivations varied, but Christian pilgrims can be distinguished from other types of travellers (teachers, prophets, healers, etc.), because they travelled for healing, prayer, guidance, intercession, oracles, etc. (Frank 2008: 826). In other words, pilgrims travelled to obtain benefits from the other world. The ability of a site to draw participants from a wider area for purposes of prayer, blessings, healings, etc., like the sites associated with the Bible, or with martyrs' shrines, is key in Christian pilgrimage. It is worth noting that early Christians did not self-identify as pilgrims, for Greek and Latin lack terms for the phenomenon (Frank 2008; Bremmer 2016).

The general meaning of *theôria* is 'observation', while *proskynema* means 'adoration' (Bremmer 2016). The Latin cognate of our modern word pilgrimage, *peregrinatio* (cf. *The Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 1335b; the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* s.v.) means to travel abroad, to wander, move about, or be a stranger. Instead, the terms used by early Christians of their travels speak of travelling for the sake of prayer or of travelling in order to venerate (*orationis causa, euchesthai, proseuchesthai, proskunein*) (Frank 2008: 826–7; Bremmer 2016).

Among the key sources for early Christian pilgrimage we find male and female pilgrims' letters, diaries, and travel writing from the fourth to sixth centuries. One of the earliest texts relating a pilgrimage to the Holy Land is an itinerary by a pilgrim from Bordeaux from *c*.333 (Elsner 2000). In the 380s or 390s, the female pilgrim known as Egeria travelled from Gaul to pilgrimage in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor. Her diary relates details of Christian architecture, how scripture was read aloud to her at sacred sites, the blessings she received along the way, as well as the church and monastery officials she met. Egeria visits both places known from the Old Testament, places known from the gospels, and famous monasteries and healing centres (Frank 2008: 827–8). Pilgrimage to famous ascetics about whom fantastic stories of marvels, magic, and miracles circulated have been the topic of a number of recent studies (Frank 2000), which demonstrate how certain spaces, persons, and objects were invested with religious power and exoticized. The ancient writer Jerome's descriptions of the visits of his friend Paula to sacred sites in Judea and to monasteries in Egypt mention the power of these special places to evoke visions. He and Paula wrote several letters exhorting Roman aristocrats to go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In the fourth century, pilgrimage became a literary motif in biographies of Christian heroes (Whalen 2011: 26–32), while the abovementioned criticism of pilgrimage and the dangers associated with it appear in writers such as Gregory of Nyssa and Athanasius (Brakke 1998: 292–302). The latter probably reflects power struggles and efforts to preserve ecclesiastical control (Bitton-Ashkelony 2005; Frank 2008: 830), for the pilgrims' diaries emphasize the value of seeing and touching religiously powerful sites and objects. In the centuries to come, further attention is spent on the material splendour of the sacred centres and a new sensibility towards the land of biblical events.

The material culture of pilgrimage documents the key roles of spatiality and materiality in this religious practice, from large buildings to small souvenirs. Archaeologists have documented the structures of centres of pilgrimage, and how the inns, service buildings, and churches were added, or changed, at the centres and along the pilgrimage routes, and how they were transformed over the centuries (Frank 2008: 831–4; Kristensen 2012; Kristensen and Friese 2016). Some pilgrimage centres were equipped with baptisteries for Christian initiation, some acquired larger places of accommodation, some added stairs, arches, or other architectural features to guide pilgrimage traffic and the movement of many bodies. Some pilgrim churches kept relics in a crypt, others at the altar. Some pilgrims continued the ancient religious practice of leaving votive offerings at pilgrimage sites; some of these reveal the nature of the help sought—healing, protection, thanksgiving, etc. (Frank 2008). Pilgrimage sites were also sites of religious

pageantry and extensive and multiple forms of sensual stimulation in visual and other media. The exoticism revealed in literary sources documents an overlap with tourism; as does the practice of bringing home religious souvenirs, as objects of memory and veneration, and as a form of documentation of a change in status, while also demonstrating the need and wish to carry home some of the healing, marvellous, or protective qualities ascribed to the pilgrimage centre (Frank 2000). As seen from the exemplary practices mentioned by Frank (2008), widespread ideas of a magic of contagion is amply demonstrated in the production of ampullae and tokens at sacred sites, in order for the pilgrims to be able to carry home, in a concrete, material form, healing and protective power. Oil or water could be poured into reliquaries, and the substance collected in small flasks and distributed to pilgrims afterwards, or the ampullae could contain dirt, water, or oil that had otherwise been in contact with the special place, person, or object. Tokens stamped with an impression were also produced for pilgrims to take home, or pilgrims could access the ritual power of the saints by writing requests for protection or other prayers on small notes, and submitting them to the shrine (Frank 2008: 833–4).

These forms of religious materiality from souvenirs to amulets and votive offerings, etc., reveal much about pilgrims' motives for travelling and about how the special power of the pilgrimage centre was understood, as well as about the crucial forms of interaction between the performances and experiences of excess and extraordinariness of pilgrimage and festivals and the social frames of everyday life.

Conclusion

In recent decades, theoretical reflections on place, space, and landscape have increased and undergone important developments in the fields of history, anthropology, and the study of religion. Scholars of spatiality pay attention to how space is produced, imagined, and lived, in addition to the more traditional interest in space as a geophysical 'reality' (Soja 1989: 124–6; Lefebvre 1991; Ingold 2000; Thrift and Whatmore 2004). Insights from spatiality theory may prove fruitful in future studies of ancient pilgrimage, as the distinctions related to different types of spatiality can offer new analytical strategies, as suggested earlier in the chapter. Distinctions drawn from spatiality theory for the analysis of social space can be supplemented with insights from narratology and used in analyses not only of the use of landscapes and/or urban spaces, but also of hagiography and other narrative or literary sources for ancient forms of pilgrimage. In human practice, the different spatial aspects cannot be fully separated, but in our analyses, we may distinguish between (1) *material space*, which concerns the concrete materiality of spatial forms, the geophysical, empirical realities described in a narrative and/or observed by the actors, in combination with external sources about the landscape or spaces in question; (2) *designed space*, which is imagined space, ideas and representations of space in culturally normative or authoritative forms; and (3) *lived space*, which designates the

experience of social space, space as lived, practised, and negotiated, building on both material space and designed space (Feldt 2016).

In early Christian studies, the topic of pilgrimage looms large and is yet elusive. Pilgrimage is mentioned often in early Christian literature from the New Testament to patristic literature and beyond, and the topic is key in discussions of asceticism, holy men, saints, relics, churches and monasteries, and more. Pilgrimage is in many ways a ritual, traditionally connected to festivals and pageantry, and yet many of our sources for pilgrimage are narrative, and in some early Christian texts, pilgrimage also attains a symbolic value and comes to function as a broader metaphor. As is well known, Augustine begins his *City of God* (*De civitate Dei*) with the observation that the Christian is a 'stranger among the ungodly' (*Civ*. 1, pref.), framing the Christian life as a metaphorical pilgrimage. Ancient Christian pilgrimage was not a sacrament, and no explicit doctrines were connected to it. Even as it is very concrete and material, pilgrimage is connected to religious ideas of alienation and marginalization, to attempting to reach and breach boundaries, through religious practices of travelling, even as it is a technology for creating the sense of a presence of something 'beyond' by travel to a centre of religious power. It is a religious practice, which involves geophysical, material spaces, imagined spaces, as well as lived spaces. Ancient Christian pilgrimage is thus also an arena in which several important themes meet and interact, and wilderness mythology (Feldt 2012b) is one of these themes, which connects the topic of pilgrimage to the topic of asceticism. The destinations of pilgrims' journeys were sometimes famous ascetic holy persons, or their relics, and both the pilgrim and the ascetic resided, temporarily or permanently, in an intermediate, liminal, boundary zone (the desert; the 'wilderness') of the religious imaginary, having left ordinary life behind, but not yet arrived at the destination. Let us, by way of conclusion, consider an example of a text which demonstrates the multiple aspects of spatiality, the move towards the metaphorical understanding of Christian life as a pilgrimage in this world, and the connection between pilgrimage and asceticism, while also offering pointers towards later, medieval developments.

As pointed out by Conrad Leyser and others, Athanasius' *Life of Antony* functioned as a foundation myth of the Christian, ascetic pioneer, breaking open the wilderness for monasticism (Leyser 2006). It also became pivotal in spreading ascetic ideals. Through letters and narratives, the desert quickly became an important, and fetishized, part of the new Christian landscape. By the end of the fourth century, aspiring Western Christians sought out the wilderness experience by venturing out into the local forests, mountains, and islands. By the 420s, a group of Christians travelled to the island of Lérins, off the coast of modern Cannes, to live the ascetic, desert life. One of them, the later bishop of Lyon, Eucherius (*c*.380–450), wrote the letter *In Praise of the Desert* (*De laude eremi*; Pricoco 1965; Vivian, Vivian, and Russell 1999), to a fellow monk, Hilary. In this text, the concrete, material space of the island of Lérins with its bubbling springs, green grass, and flowers, is connected narratively to key aspects of the designed space of Christian desert mythology from Moses to Elijah, Jesus, and beyond, in order to frame the entire Christian existence as a wilderness life, a life of pilgrimage

travelling towards the prize in the other world. The move towards assigning a metaphorical value to the desert or wilderness life or the permanent pilgrimage is seen in a statement such as 'From the dwelling places in the desert, the road lies always open to our true homeland' (*De laude eremi* 16), or 'The prayer of a humble petitioner will more easily penetrate the clouds if it rises from the desert' (*De laude eremi*, 26; Vivian, Vivian, and Russell 1999). Yet, the lived space of this particular text must be understood as firmly entrenched in elite, urban power struggles on the mainland, because it is well documented that many former monks from Lérins went on to play lead roles in contemporary public life on the mainland (termed 'the ascetic invasion' by R. Markus, cf. Leyser 1999). Eucherius may have written this particular letter in order to raise the authority of the stay in the wilderness, but also to mould it into a more figurative and thus more adaptable form, as a key prerequisite for the assumption of positions of power on the mainland (Feldt 2018: 215). The reputation of Lérins was the result of a literary movement, a literary circle of cultivated and politically active men, as Peter Brown has put it; and the group of monks from Lérins were treated as holy men by laypersons, who expected blessings in exchange for reverence and material support (Brown 2012: 412–14). This particular text is thus also a testimony of how dependent key developments in early Christian pilgrimage have been on literary culture and certain forms of media, and how bound up also the metaphorical understanding of Christian pilgrimage is with contemporary issues in ancient social life.

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CHAPTER 18

DIVINATION

MARTTI NISSINEN

Divination, Magic, and Ritual: Conceptual Analysis

The relationship between divination and ritual is as complex as it is obvious, whether one understands divination and ritual as concepts or as practices. At the conceptual level, divination is not a direct equivalent of ritual, and the concepts are not interdependent in the way that would make the one a necessary part of the explanation of the other. However, the way divination works is often difficult to explain without a reference to its ritual aspect. Divination may take place as a part of a larger ritual context, and divinatory practices may involve activities that are best described as ritual performances. Moreover, since divination is symbolic activity to a high degree, it is worth investigating whether the divinatory process as such can be perceived of as a ritual. The interface between divination and ritual can, thus, be studied from a twofold perspective: *divinatory rituals* and *divination as ritual*.

Both divination and ritual are discussed as family resemblance, or polythetic, categories, that is, consisting of an ample but unspecified amount of common characteristics present in the majority of members of each category but not necessarily in all of them (cf. Sørensen 2005: 49; Snoek 2006: 4–7; Uro 2016: 28). To explain the two central terms very briefly, 'divination' in this chapter stands for acts of acquisition and transmission of allegedly superhuman knowledge by various means, while 'ritual' is understood as social action and symbolic communication, distinguished from ordinary action by some specific quality such as time, place, agency, agenda, purpose, or message.

The interface of ritual and divination is comparable to that between ritual and magic, since divination and magic share many features regarding the communication between the human and the superhuman, such as agency, symbolic interpretation, and ritualization. I shall return to these crucial features later in this chapter; at this point, however, it is necessary to make a conceptual difference between divination and magic. 'Magic'

can be defined as symbolic ritual activity with the purpose of attaining a specific goal by means of divine-human communication and superhuman assistance, relying on specific skills, actions, and knowledge required from the human agent (Schmitt 2004: 92–3; for a definition of 'magic', see also Czachesz, Chapter 11 in this volume). For the most part, this definition could concern divination as well; however, a terminological distinction of magic and divination suggests itself because of differences in their practice and purpose.

Divination is motivated by the conviction that everything on Earth is dependent on the divine will, the full knowledge of which, however, is beyond the cognitive capacity of human beings. Therefore, it is necessary to consult superhuman, full-access agents who possess the strategic information necessary for humans to be able to act in the best possible way (Pyysiäinen 2009: 31–2). Consulting superhuman sources of knowledge is often a professional activity, the diviners constituting the link between humans and their divine informants. Divination is supposed to have an effect on human decisions and its goal is often to bring about change. However, divination normally forms only an initial part of the decision-making process, detecting and defining its preconditions but not participating in its realization.

Magic, on the other hand, is itself a means of attaining a certain goal and actively bringing about the intended change, whether beneficial or harmful. The magician is an agent whose activity is supposed to have a direct effect to the patient—not *ex opere operato*, however, but typically as the result of the alleged divine-human collaboration (Schmitt 2004: 91). Magic is often ritual activity, involving performative acts symbolically representing the object, patient, and purpose of the activity. The symbolic elements may be verbal (blessing, curse, incantation, prayer, etc.) and/or material (liquids, foodstuff, figurines, etc.), and they form part of the ritual ensemble consisting of human, superhuman, and material components.

Magic and divination have much in common, especially the alleged collaboration of the human and superhuman agents and the crucial function executed by the human agent. Some forms of magic and divination may be practised by any individual; however, their most-valued practitioners tend to be professionals acknowledged and 'certified' by their own community or at least a part of it. Both a diviner and a magician must be believed to possess special skills and the capacity to act in collaboration with divine agents. The superhuman agency is taken for granted both in magic and in divination, but since it is beyond everyday perception, it cannot be confirmed in the same way as ordinary things. Diviners and magicians may be distrusted, either because their competence is found doubtful, the superhuman powers represented by them are not believed in, or because they are found to be hostile or strange (cf. Flower 2008: 132–52).

The difference between magic and divination is evident in terms of function, representation, and agency. The function of divination is to acquire and transmit superhuman knowledge. A diviner, whether a prophet, an augur, a haruspex, or an astrologer, receives and interprets messages and omens that are believed to be of divine origin, informing his or her audience about the meaning and interpretation of these messages and omens. Drawing consequences is the responsibility of the recipients who are supposed to act

accordingly. The function of magic, again, is to bring about a change: healing, expelling a demon, causing damage, or warding off evil. This is probably why demons feature much more prominently in magic than in divination.

The diverse functions of magic and divination cause different performances. How divination works depends on the method. In Mesopotamia, for instance, the performance of a prophet typically happened orally in an altered state of consciousness in a public space such as a temple, while the haruspex (a diviner investigating the entrails of sacrificial animals) performed the divinatory ritual privately in an ordinary state of mind, informing the consultant on the divine judgement by way of a written report. Both ways, the result of the performance is a verbal summary of the acquired divine knowledge. Spoken and written verbal expressions are also used in magical acts, but their function and contents are performative rather than narrative; that is, they are not meant for transmission of information but for fulfilment of the purpose of the act. Even the role of the material element is different in a magical performance compared to a divinatory act: the sheep's liver or the constellation of stars functions as the platform of the omen to be interpreted, while the material used in magic may be directly related to the efficacy of the act (for instance, water); it may represent the patient of the act (for instance, hair), or symbolize divine protection (for instance, an amulet).

Differences in function and performance entail differences in agency. While the diviner receives and mediates superhuman knowledge, the magician puts such knowledge into practice. The agency of the magician is often more proactive and goal-oriented than the agency of the diviner, because the emphasis of divinatory agency is on the preconditions of the action, while magical agency is directed to the effect.

In spite of the differences in function, performance, and agency, magic and divination are not completely separate practices, and the roles of the diviner and the magician may overlap. In the biblical imagination, a prophet such as Isaiah or Jeremiah may be found performing what is best described as a magical act (2 Kgs 20:7//Isa. 38:21; Jer. 51:59–64); a Mesopotamian diviner may use a prophet's hair and a fringe of a cloth to test the veracity of her or his prophecy (see Hamori 2012); and in the Greek magical papyri from Roman Egypt, divination appears as but one of a variety of magical practices (see Suárez de la Torre 2013). On the conceptual level, magic and divination are, therefore, polythetic categories sharing certain family resemblances. As practices, magic and divination should be understood as interrelated methods of divine-human communication.

Recognizing the conceptual kinship of magic and divination is important when we turn to the ritual aspect of prophecy and divination. In his cognitive theory of magic, Jesper Sørensen launches a useful model of human action consisting of the conditional space, the action space, and the effect space, whereby diagnosis connects the conditional space with the action space, while prognosis links the action space to the effect space (Sørensen 2005; 2007: 141–53). Ritual action, also in magical contexts, tends to bypass the domain-specific expectations governing the relation between the condition, the action, and the effect, removing actions, agents, and objects from their ordinary perceptual domains and conveying symbolic interpretations for the diagnosis and the prognosis. Symbolic interpretations, which are attached to existing cultural, mythological,

and theological models, largely replace ordinary perceptual clues as the explanation of the diagnosis and the prognosis, hence enabling a causal interpretation of the efficacy of the ritual.

Divination is not simply foretelling the future. Rather than downright prediction, divination is a method of *Zukunftsbewältigung*, or coping with the future, and, therefore, fundamentally is about diagnosis and prognosis (Maul 2013). The sources from the ancient world make it clear that communities and individuals, whether kings or private citizens, felt a strong need to acquire what was perceived of as divine knowledge to cope with their lives and to make the right decisions. In a divinatory act, the solicited or unsolicited transfer of divine knowledge serves as the diagnosis which connects the superhuman conditional space with the human action space. The prognosis linking the action with the effects, again, is the expectation of what consequences should be drawn from the acquired divine knowledge. Divination can be understood as a cognitive process linking human action with its (presumed) preconditions and its (presumed) effects. The effects can be seen as the ultimate purpose of divinatory activity, even though they are not directly brought about by the divinatory acts.

Divinatory Rituals, Divination in Rituals: Extispicy and Prophecy

The art of divination is manifold, but its many methods can be roughly divided into two basic types (Nissinen 2010; Stökl 2012: 7–11; Koch 2015: 15–18). Some divinatory methods are based on cognitive processes related to the systematization of omens recognized in observable objects or phenomena, such as stars (astrology), entrails of sacrificial animals (extispicy, also called haruspicy), or the flight of birds (augury). These methods are usually called technical, inductive, or artificial. The other type consists of divinatory methods that do not involve omens and observations, but communicate messages believed to be received intuitively, typically in an altered or 'inspired' state of consciousness. These methods, including prophecy and visionary activity, are referred to as intuitive, inspired, or natural divination.

The division between technical and intuitive divination is far from absolute. In Mesopotamian sources, the distribution of divinatory roles is clear-cut. The job descriptions of, for example, haruspices, astrologers, and prophets never overlap, and especially the methods of technical divination require specialization through education, which makes their use virtually impossible for an untrained person. In Greek and biblical sources, however, the technical/intuitive divide is less sharp, and people can be found using different methods of divination, which are usually not based on thorough education (Flower 2008: 84–91; Hamori 2015: 26–31). The terminological separation should not be understood in an essentialist way, but, rather, as a heuristic tool that works as long as it helps to explain the phenomenon of divination. The division of divinatory methods

into the technical and intuitive types makes sense, on the one hand, because it is recognized by the sources, whether biblical, Greek, or Mesopotamian; and, on the other hand, because the two types represent different cognitive modes. While technical divination, such as extispicy, utilizes a logico-scientific mode in explaining superhuman causality by way of systematized observation, intuitive divination, such as prophecy, is based on a narrative mode in transmitting divine knowledge to the audience without using any analytical tools (see Vedeler 2015, deriving the two cognitive modes from Bruner 1986).

Divination is affiliated with ritual action in various ways, which I will now exemplify with two methods representing the technical and the intuitive types of divination: extispicy and prophecy.

Reading the entrails of a sacrificial animal—more often than not the liver and the lungs of a sheep—was practised not only by Babylonians and Assyrians but also by Hittites, Etruscans, and Greeks. The practice of extispicy first appears in Mesopotamia in the third millennium BCE, and its distribution around the Mediterranean is very probably due to interactions between the cultures (Furley and Gysembergh 2015: 77–95). In Mesopotamia, 'the art of the seer' (*bārûtu*) was the primary means of acquiring divine knowledge for the purposes of the royal decision-making (see Koch 2015: 67–134). The haruspex was a highly educated professional whose skills included not only the proper inspection of the entrails of the sacrificial animals but also profound knowledge of the canonical omen literature and the ability to write a report of the divination. The extant sources suggest that extispicies were performed primarily (although not exclusively) for the king, and their topics concerned the safety of the land and the royal family, political and military matters, and the king's private affairs. The god of extispicy par excellence was the sungod Šamaš, but a number of other gods participated in the judgement and were invoked as well (Steinkeller 2005).

The act of extispicy was performed as a ritual, the purpose of which was to give a positive or negative answer to the question of the consultant, such as: 'Šamaš, great lord, give me a firm positive answer to what I am asking you! Should Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, strive and plan? Should he enter his son, Sin-nadin-apli, whose name is written in this papyrus and placed before your great divinity, into the Succession Palace?' (SAA 4 149:1–4; Starr 1990: 160; date: mid-670s BCE). The question alone suggests a ritual setting, indicating that the papyrus on which the question was written was placed before the statue of the god. The entire sequence of ritual actions performed during the extispicy is not described in the sources available to us, but a number of prayers have been preserved (Starr 1983), which give enough idea of the nature of the basic components of the Mesopotamian extispicy ritual (for the following reconstruction, see Koch 2015: 72–4; cf. Steinkeller 2005).

The ritual actions begin in the evening preceding the extispicy by summoning the gods present at the extispicy. The diviner (*bārû*) first cleanses his mouth and then recites a prayer, in which he implores the gods to be truthfully present in the extispicy. Incense is burned and ablutions are poured for the gods to wash themselves. The gods are convened to pronounce judgement, the lamb is presented to them, and they conduct a nocturnal trial over the consultant. The ritual slaughter and the inspection of the entrails are

performed at daybreak by the diviner. Prayers (*ikribu*)—both the *ikribu* of the right side, concerning the well-being of the consultant, and the *ikribu* of the left side, concerning his/her non-well-being—follow the course of the inspection of the intestines, which is performed in a fixed order. The divine judgement is deduced from the inspection and the report is written on a cuneiform tablet.

Extispicy appears in the Greek world for the first time at the late sixth century BCE at the latest. Vase paintings showing extispicy are known from that period, and literary references to it in major Greek authors such as Herodotus, Thucydides, Aeschylus, and Xenophon become common in the fifth and fourth century BCE. At that time, extispicy became the principal form of technical divination in Greece, and even though the liver-reading was never developed as sophisticated a system as it was in Mesopotamia or Etruria, it was nevertheless a *tekhnē* that could only be performed by specialized experts (for Greek extispicy, see Collins 2008; Flower 2008: 32–7, 52–8, 159–65; Furley and Gysembergh 2015).

Greek extispicy took place especially during military campaigns, and the divinatory act was always preceded by a sacrifice. Sacrifices involving the investigation of the entrails of the sacrificial animals were called *hiera*, while another type of sacrifice, *sphagia*, was intended to observe the flow of blood. Texts comparable to the Mesopotamian *ikribu*, or any kind of diviner's manuals, are not known from the Greek world, hence the procedures of Greek divinatory rituals are not known precisely. It becomes clear from the writings of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and other authors that the *hiera* (the word denotes both the ritual and the signs) were regularly performed before setting out on a military campaign. The rites may also have included burnt offerings, and the sacrificial meat may have been consumed.

What unites Mesopotamian and Greek practices of extispicy from the ritual point of view is that in both cases, sacrifice and prayer are intertwined with divination in a way that makes the act of extispicy as a whole appear as a bidirectional ritual act. The sacrifice and prayer were directed towards the supernatural in order to receive a sign as the divine response (Beerden 2013: 32–4). Extispicy without a ritual was not even possible, since it could not have been performed without sacrificing the animal whose intestines were the object in which the divinely inscribed signs were to be found. The precondition of a successful extispicy was the divine presence. The sacrificial destruction of the animal transformed it 'from an external object in the world of things into something more intimate and immanent to human beings: a part of the divine world' (Bell 2005: 7854; cf. Bataille 1973: 58–60), and even the diviner had to be inspired by the gods when 'the diviner experienced the presence of the divine assembly itself, which had gathered around the victim to write their judgements in the organs of the animal' (Lenzi 2008: 55; cf. Flower 2008: 91; Winitzer 2010).

While the act of extispicy cannot be separated from accompanying ritual elements, prophecy constitutes a more tangled case. Prophecy, according to the prevailing scholarly definition, is transmission of allegedly divine knowledge by non-technical means, typically in an altered state of consciousness (Weippert 2014: 231–2). Often unprovoked, the prophetic performance does not in principle presuppose a ritual or otherwise

predetermined context. Nevertheless, it could well take place within ritual contexts in ancient Eastern Mediterranean temples, and the prophetic performance could also be thoroughly ritualized, as was the case in the principal sites of the Apollonian oracle, Delphi, Didyma, and Claros.

At Didyma, for example, the oracular session seems to have been embedded in a ritual setting (cf. Parke 1985: 218–19; Fontenrose 1988: 78–85; Lampinen 2013: 84–7). According to the description of Iamblichus (*Myst.* 3.11), dependent on Porphyry, the female prophet of Apollo at Didyma prepared herself for the reception of the god by fasting and bathing in the sacred precinct. During the preparations and/or the oracular process itself, the female prophet held a staff, sat on an axle, and dipped her feet in the water of the sacred spring rising within the inner sanctum (*adyton*); the exact order of these elements in the oracular ritual is not clear. The contact with the water of the sacred spring, and especially inhaling its vapours, enabled the prophet, in Iamblichus' Neoplatonist terms, to 'partake of the god', that is, to become possessed by him and become his instrument (see Addey 2014). The oracular session was participated in by the *prophētēs* who was not an inspired speaker but the temple official who was responsible for mediating the divine words in versified form to the consultants. The whole Didymaean procedure from the preparations of the female prophet to writing down the oracles in the *khrēsmographion* can be perceived of as a divinatory ritual.

The oracular process at the sanctuaries of Apollo at Delphi (see Fontenrose 1978: 196–228; Bowden 2005: 17–38) and Claros (see Parke 1985: 220–1; Lampinen 2013: 80–4) were comparable but not identical to that at Didyma; in all three cases, the reception of the divine word was organized as the focal point of a ritual procedure. The picture is different in Mesopotamian sources, in which the connection between prophecy and ritual clearly exists but is more difficult to figure out on the basis of the sources available to us. On the basis of the substantial amount of evidence for the presence of prophets (*muḫḫûm/maḫḫû*) in the temples of Mari, Assyria, and Babylonia, one would expect the prophets to feature often in descriptions of rituals. Such texts, in fact, are very few, but they are enough to demonstrate that prophets indeed had a role to play in some Mesopotamian rituals.

Two texts from eighteenth-century BCE Mari pertaining to one of the foremost rituals of this city-state, the ritual of Ištar, include sections in which prophets are mentioned (FM 3 2 and 3 3; see Durand and Guichard 1997: 72–5). One of the texts mentions a male prophet and the other a group of female prophets who perform during the ritual in interplay with musicians. Broken as both texts are, they do not yield a complete picture of the ritual procedure, but in both of them, the performance of the musicians is somehow dependent on the prophets' ability to reach an altered state of consciousness. The divine inspiration, therefore, could not be taken for granted. Neither was the successful performance of the ritual dependent on the prophetic element, which does not seem to have formed the focal point of the ritual.

Another ritual text, dating from the Neo-Babylonian period more than a millennium after the texts from Mari, also mentions a prophet together with musicians performing in the ritual of the Lady of Uruk (LKU 51; Beaulieu 2003: 375). The text says nothing

of the prophet's actual prophesying; instead, he goes around (the statue of the goddess?) carrying a water-basin while a copper kettledrum is played and sacrificial meals are offered. Here, too, the prophet appears as another cultic functionary in a ritual not primarily focused on divination but possibly containing a divinatory element within a larger ritual framework.

The different interfaces of ritual and divination seem to be partly, but not entirely, due to the method of divination. Extispicy, requiring the slaughter of a sacrificial animal, is by necessity intertwined with (other) ritual acts, and even prophecy, as practised in the major Greek oracle sites, could be organized as a ritual procedure. In the Near Eastern sources, prophecy in general is closely associated with temples, but prophetic performances are not presented as rituals in their own right; if prophets perform in ritual contexts, their performance is subordinate to the main purpose of the ritual.

Divination as Ritual?

While 'rarely does an analysis decide something is not a ritual' (Bell 2005: 7848), I would like to resist the temptation of prematurely defining divination *as* a ritual. The above survey of the ritual dimension in extispicy and prophecy has demonstrated the complexity of the interface of ritual between divination. A ritual act may be the unconditional prerequisite of a divinatory performance, as is the case of extispicy and apparently also of Greek oracles of Apollo. In these cases, the divinatory procedure in its entirety is well describable as a ritual. On the other hand, a divinatory act such as the prophetic proclamation of a divine message may be performed outside of any ritual framework. This is the case in ancient Near Eastern sources, which seldom present the prophetic process of communication as a ritual in its own right, but sometimes make prophets appear in a ritual context.

In fact, the sources tend to be quite unspecific about any details accompanying the divinatory performance other than the divine message proper, which leaves us largely ignorant of how they actually took place. This indicates a further complication in exploring the interface between ancient ritual and divination if we want to discuss them as historical and not only as analytical categories (cf. Bell 2005: 7852): our view is badly restricted by the fragmentary set of sources we have at our disposal. A ritual described or prescribed in a written text is not a ritual as a performance (Wright 2012: 197). Moreover, the lack of a ritual description does not necessarily indicate the lack of ritual performance in the reality the text is reflecting. The written artifact can be assumed to have a historical connection with the ritual it deals with, but it allows us only a limited access to the phenomenon. Whatever ritual agencies can be found in the texts, they always come to us as the result of the decisions made by scribal agents, the gatekeepers of our access to the past. This necessarily results in an incomplete and potentially distorted image of the ancient phenomena, which must be kept in mind when reconstructing ancient rituals or practices.

The relative uncertainty about historical realities reflected by the sources can only be helped by the discovery of new source materials. Therefore, a comparative conceptual analysis may appear to be helpful, not only in imagining what is not directly visible in the sources, but also in identifying some domain-specific (rather than time- or place-specific) structures and modes of action attached to divinatory and ritual activities. One of the most useful and, indeed, necessary concepts in mapping the interface of ritual and divination is *agency*, which highlights the comparability of ritual and divinatory acts.

Jesper Sørensen analyses magical agency from a threefold perspective ascribing the agency to agent, action, and object (2007: 65–74; cf. Lawson and McCauley 1990; McCauley and Lawson 2002; Uro 2016: 33–5, 65–6). When agent-based agency is emphasized, the agent performing the magical act is the wielder of ritual efficacy and the facilitator of the transfer of essence between the sacred and the profane space, either through a role-value counterpart connection or through an identity connector. In action-based agency, the efficacy of the ritual is dependent on the correct reproduction of a ritual sequence which creates a connection between the sacred and profane spaces. The procedural character of the action as well as the speech-acts belonging to it makes it independent from the performer. Object-based agency, on the other hand, ascribes the ritual efficacy to the object used in the ritual, often relying on perceptual resemblance to elements in the sacred space.

Thanks to the relatedness of the categories of magic and divination, the threefold scheme of agent-, action-, and object-based agencies can be applied also to divinatory acts which, as we have seen, are also perceived of as communication between the sacred and profane spaces. Different kinds of divinatory performances emphasize the three elements of agency differently, which becomes evident when we, again, compare extispicy and prophecy.

In extispicy, all three elements function prominently. The object is important: not just any part of the entrails of an animal functioned as the site of the divine signs but only the one in which the gods had chosen to be present. This, again, required a proper action: the animal must have been sacrificed following the correct procedure, which included the flawlessness of the animal and the purity and appropriateness of the performers of the ritual. Finally, the agent, that is, the diviner, had to be fully qualified to perform the inspection of the entrails, which was an impossible task for anyone without a proper education. While all three aspects of agency, hence, are significant for the efficient performance of extispicy, it may best be described as relying primarily on the action-based agency—not because the agent and the object were less significant, but because the fixed ritual procedure was the permanent connector of the sacred and profane spaces, while the object was different every time, and also the agent could change.

In prophecy, the three elements of agency are present but differently organized. Prophets may occasionally use objects in their performances, but no specific agency, let alone efficacy, is ascribed to such objects, neither do prophetic performances seem to follow prescribed ritual procedures unless they form part of another framework. What matters most in prophetic divination is agent-based agency, especially the role of the prophet as an identity connector. This is exactly what is at stake 'in temporary examples

of possession, in which an agent belonging to the sacred space simply takes over the agent of the profane space' (Sørensen 2007: 67). In the prophetic process of communication, the actual agent is the divine sender of the prophetic message, whose inspired mouthpiece the human agent, the prophet, is believed to be.

Both prophecy and extispicy, therefore, share the basic elements of ritual agency with magic, indeed, with ritualized activity in general, and the same is probably true with most divinatory methods. Prophecy functions in a way somewhat similar to what Robert McCauley and Thomas Lawson call a special agent ritual (McCauley and Lawson 2002: 120–2; cf. Uro 2010: 232–3; 2016: 33–4, 85–7). The prophetic performance is not repeatable, it does not follow a set procedure, and the connection between the superhuman agent and the audience happens exclusively through the special agent, the prophet, who is believed to be capable of acting as the mouthpiece of the god. However, unlike the special agent ritual, prophecy is not necessarily performed for one single patient at a time. Extispicy, too, could perhaps be called a special agent ritual. It is performed frequently—not, however, according to a fixed timetable but, rather, on demand; it can only be performed by an agent with acknowledged qualifications, while the consultants may change; and it is usually performed for one patient only. However, extispicy also shares features with special instrument rituals, because the connection with the superhuman agent happens not only through the agent but also through the entrails of the sacrificed animal, in which the god is believed to be present.

Furthermore, ritual and divination have a similar social function: if ritualization is 'a strategy for the construction of certain types of power relationships effective within particular social organizations' (Bell 1992: 197), the same is certainly true for divination. Divinatory acts typically serve the construction and negotiation of power relationships and are, depending on the method, often ritualized.

Is it, then, because of all these points of convergence, justified to conclude that divination *is* ritual? An unequivocal answer to this question is not readily at hand. To state categorically that divination *is not* a ritual does not suggest itself, because divinatory acts are so often organized and performed in a way that reveals unmistakably ritual elements. But cannot the same be said of a random and unplanned prophetic performance happening outside of any ritual framework?

Evidently, divination and ritual should be discussed as distinct categories, even though they overlap to a considerable degree. Divination, like ritual, is social action and symbolic communication. 'Ritual participants *do* something to something or somebody' (Sørensen 2005: 52, emphasis original), and the same could be said of divination. However, we have to ask who is the patient in divination, and what kind of efficacy a divinatory act is supposed to have. The consultant of extispicy and the addressee of a prophetic speech can be said to be the patients of the divinatory act, but they are not patients in the same sense as, for instance, in healing or in a magical act. The purpose of divination is not primarily to bring about a change in the life or the status of the consultant or the addressee him/herself, but to have an influence on his/her action with regard to the matter consulted and on the basis of the knowledge acquired from the superhuman full-access agents. The efficacy of the divinatory act, therefore, is indirect and dependent on the patient's own action and interpretation.

Early Christianity

Early Christianity forms part of the ancient Eastern Mediterranean world when it comes to ritual and divination. Prophecy was an accepted and appreciated institution in the first centuries CE (Aune 1983: 203–11). As far as can be judged from early Christian writings (for instance, 1 Cor. 12 and Did. 11–13), two features of prophecy stand out: first, prophetic activity typically coincides with cultic celebrations, thus having a markedly ritual context; and, second, prophets assume leadership roles in early Christian communities. The ritual context is a shared feature with ancient Eastern Mediterranean prophecy in general, while community leadership is untypical of prophecy in non-Christian contexts. While this places prophecy differently in the early Christian authority structure in comparison with the contemporary or earlier types of Eastern Mediterranean prophecy, the agency of the Christian prophets, especially their role as identity connectors, was essentially the same. The prophets executed the function of inspired spokesmen of the divine authority both ritually and as community leaders. At the same time, prophecy appears as a relatively unstable, structurally diverse, and locally legitimized institution, which after the full institutionalization of the church became rare.

Divination other than prophecy was a matter of a much longer-lasting debate in early Christianity from the Apostolic Fathers to the Church Fathers. While Lactantius used Apollonian oracles as testimonies in his defence of the Christian doctrine (see Kaltio 2013), most Christian writers condemned divinatory practitioners, especially those of Christians themselves. The centuries-long debate against magical and divinatory practices demonstrates that they were widely practised by Christians who, to judge from the prohibitions, turned to both written oracle texts and expert diviners when they needed insight into the future (see Luijendijk 2014: 79–91). Christians are not found practising types of divination requiring sophisticated expertise such as reading the liver. Instead, they seem to have relied on simpler methods such as sortilege (*sortes*), a kind of lot oracle involving a ritual in which an oracle is located in a written codex and interpreted for the consultant. Texts representing the *sortes* genre are known from manuscripts written in different languages, and some of them have an emphatically Christian character, such as the recently published Coptic fifth- or sixth-century *Gospel of the Lots of Mary* (Luijendijk 2014). Such a text, small enough to be carried in a pocket or a pouch, could be used by an itinerant *sortilegus*/*sortilega* who could perform the ritual anywhere his/her services were needed.

The *sortes* provide an interesting example of early Christian divinatory agency that did not differ in any significant manner from that in its cultural environment. They respond to the same human needs as oracles and divination in general, and they represent a similar kind of an agent-based divinatory agency as the Eastern Mediterranean oracle institutions. Most importantly, the lots, through the divinatory and ritual specialist, functioned as a channel for an individual to become conversant with superhuman knowledge—something that was taken seriously even by the polemists whose criticism is primarily targeted at the practitioners rather than the practice itself. This highlights

the social aspect of the divinatory agency, which is closely related to the issue of authority and legitimacy.

All divination happens within a socio-religious structure, and, therefore, the agent, action, and object of any divinatory act may be either be approved of or contested by members of the community within which the act takes place. The diviner's claim to divine knowledge may bring divinatory agency into question, not because there is disagreement about the functionality and efficacy of the divinatory (ritual) act, but because of its challenge to existing authority structures. When early Christian writers make claims about prophecy and divination, it often amounts to 'formulating identity, constructing epistemic boundaries, and shoring up their own authority' (Nasrallah 2003: 26). Therefore, the way divination links human action with its (presumed) preconditions and its (presumed) effects is never a 'neutral' process but deeply entangled in the social and ideological positions of the agents and agencies involved in this process.

Conclusion

Sources of Early Christian divination are not ample enough to form an adequate basis for mapping the interface of ritual and divination. Therefore, I have used examples from ancient Near Eastern and Greek divinatory practices, especially extispicy and prophecy, to demonstrate different facets of the ritual aspect in the acquisition and transmission of allegedly divine knowledge. Extispicy could not be properly performed without a ritual sacrifice of the animal, the intestines of which served as the instrument of acquiring divine knowledge. In the case of extispicy, the divinatory act can as such be regarded as a ritual. Prophetic divination, on the other hand, may or may not have been embedded in a ritual setting, even though it, unlike extispicy, usually took place in temples and was typically performed in an altered state of consciousness.

Divination and ritual are best compared from the point of view of agency. Whether or not divination is performed by way of a ritual act, it normally involves an agent, a patient, and an instrument. Divinatory agency is mostly agent-based rather than action- or object-based. Hence, divinatory acts can be compared to, and sometimes even characterized as, special agent rituals—not without qualification, however, since in some forms of divination even the object (such as the sheep's liver or the *sortes*) and the action (proper performance of the oracular procedure) play an important role. While it cannot be said that any divinatory act *is* a ritual in a general or generic sense, it is virtually impossible to speak of divination without referring to its ritual aspect.

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CHAPTER 19

INITIATION

LUTHER H. MARTIN

Introduction

Most broadly, initiation refers to ordinary procedures of recruiting and admitting new members to some social group. Initiation into specifically religious groups involves admission practices legitimated by claims to the authority of superhuman agents. Traditionally, however, membership in social groups and to a particular social status within those groups was a matter of birth.

Homo sapiens evolved as a social species, adapted to function in small groups. According to the 'social brain hypothesis' (Gamble et al. 2014), the size and function of these groups are constrained by the kinds and amount of social information it is possible for human brains to process. These constraints result in 'natural', face-to-face social formations of about 150 members, the maximum number of people that can have social relationships based on personal relationships and trust (i.e. 'Dunbar's number'; Dunbar 1996: 69–75). Membership in such natural groups was usually structured in terms of kin categories.

While modelled on birth groups, kinship is not primarily a matter of biology but is a socially defined relationship that may also be acquired by marriage or, importantly, by the often unappreciated social strategy of 'adoption' by which fictive kin status could be extended not only to new siblings and heirs but also claimed for antecedents as well (Smith 1903). This strategy of kin recruitment and attribution not only allowed societies more quickly to replenish their populations following the perils of war or the ravages of disease but also to establish and/or legitimate a collective identity by claims of common descent from, or affinity with, a noteworthy ancestor (e.g. Abraham), a distinctive hero (e.g. Heracles), or even a deity (e.g. Apollo). Claim to kinship, in other words, whether actual or fictive, is an ideology, shaped by genetic kin selection, which activates a universal psychology of social relationships (Jones 2004) that promotes social solidarity and establishes transgenerational identity.

When the 150-member constraint upon small-scale societies is exceeded, the social processing capacities of the human brain become strained and face-to-face relationships are replaced by a hierarchical leadership with its consolidation of power and political governance. The social brain hypothesis predicts, however, that sub-groups, based on relations of intimacy, will continue to persist as special interest groups within these larger-scale societies: in addition to the 'natural' groupings of 150, circles of close friends will typically number twelve to fifteen, and alliances characteristic of clubs and cliques will number around thirty-five. These small(er)-scale social formations offer alternatives to birth groups, on the one hand, and to large-scale political homogeneity, on the other. However, these 'non-natural voluntary associations' require some formal procedure for admitting new members into the group and for recognizing their newly ascribed status.

The Greek and Roman legal categories of adoption (Gk: *huiothesia*; Lt: *adoptio*) provided a ready model for the initiatory rites of groups whose participants were not members by birth, as were, for example, the majority of adherents to Hellenistic Jewish groups. This juridical process conferred full legal entitlements of kinship by birth, with its rights and privileges. Such rights were largely conferred upon males to assure continuity and inheritance within a familial dynasty, or to males and females to augment membership within a particular special interest group, for example, by conversion to a new religion.

Graeco-Roman Social Groups

As applied to ancient Greek practices (and literature), the category of initiation is an explanatory frame born of anthropological and sociological description and theory that has a long and contested history. Does it describe adolescent 'coming-of-age rituals' or 'secret introduction rites' into some 'mystery cult'? Are such rites best explained from psychoanalytic views, or from those of phenomenology, structuralism, or ritual theory (Padilla 1999; Dodd and Faraone 2003)?

Historically, Greek initiatory groups—private clubs or societies (*thiasoi*)—are documented from the classical period (see Kloppenborg, Chapter 9 in this volume). As these groups were an alternative to the public institutions of political life, their status was ambiguous until the Athenian statesman Solon accepted their legality in the sixth century BCE, 'provided they were not contrary to the laws of the state' (Gaius, *Digesta* 47.22.4); the Roman *collegia* were attributed to Numa, the traditional seventh-century BCE king of Rome (Plutarch, *Num*. 17; Pliny, *Hist. Nat*. 34:1; 35.159). Following a period of legal uncertainty, the Roman Senate, in 136 CE, legalized the formation of associations devoted to funerary obligations—a traditional function of kin from whom citizens of an international empire were often separated—provided they met not more than once a month. Claims of their founding by renowned rulers together with legislative recognition

provided the Graeco-Roman associations with genealogical authority as well as with legal precedent for their activities.

Following the fourth-century BCE conquests of Alexander the Great, private, non-public associations proliferated. Under the increasingly cosmopolitan conditions of successive Graeco-Roman empires, the local character of traditional social organization—the *gens, demes, poleis*—was encroached upon by their progressive inclusion in large-scale social and political administrations. As predicted by the social brain hypothesis, alternative small-scale, special-interest associations, having an average size of thirty-five (Kloppenborg 1996: 25), flourished in response. These Graeco-Roman associations included clubs (*thiasoi, collegia, sodales*) with various political agendas, philosophical concerns, and/or funerary obligations, religio-social commitments, professional and artisan interests, or simply social gatherings by fraternities (and sororities) that met for meals and fellowship. These associations were not exclusive. Members of one association might also participate in others, and the purposes of these associations might overlap. Membership requirements were often simply by vote of existing members and by payment of an entrance fee, and/or monthly dues. More stringent practices of initiation into these groups could vary from one to another depending upon the objective(s) of the particular association.

Philosophical Schools

Philosophical schools (*philosophiai*) were among the earliest of the Greek small-scale associations. Those established in the sixth century BCE by Pythagoras of Samos were organized as quasi-religious associations that included rites of initiation, private teachings, hierarchical grades, the following of a dietary regime, moral prescriptions, and provisions for burial (Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras* 17–18 [Taylor 1918: 37–48]). Although Pythagoras made well-known contributions to mathematics, music, and astronomy, Pythagoreanism subsequently became a popular designation for recondite, if somewhat diverse, religious movements, members of which were known as *akousmatikoi* ('listeners') to the teachings (*symbola*) of Pythagoras. The establishment of the Pythagorean societies was followed in the fourth century BCE by those of the Platonic 'Academy' and the Aristotelian 'Peripatetics'. Although the organizational details of these associations are unknown, both appear to have been organized on the legal model of the associations (Mason 1996).

Although a classical period of Greek philosophy is generally concluded with the death of Aristotle in 322 BCE, the year following the death of his student Alexander, the naturalistic and empirical tradition of research exemplified by Aristotle's work continued throughout the early Hellenistic period. This tradition was exemplified by the observations of such astronomers as Aristarchus (mid-third century BCE) and Hipparchus (second-half of second century BCE), by the advances of such mathematicians as Euclid

(*c*.325–*c*.250 BCE), Archimedes (*c*.287–212 or 211 BCE), and by the work of the naturalist Theophrastus (*c*.371–*c*.287 BCE).

As populations became separated from kith and kin as a consequence of the new social mobility offered by imperial conditions, such as commercial enterprises or military deployments, and were set adrift in the previously unimagined and unimaginable expanses of the new astronomical cosmology epitomized in the second century CE by Claudius Ptolemy (*Tetrabiblos*), life during this period became increasingly understood to be subject to irrational forces, to chance, or to powers beyond ordinary human control. Such existential alienation could only be dealt with by cult and magic, as, for example, the endorsement of divination by the Stoics (e.g. Cicero, *Div*. 1), who identified *philosophia* with piety (Gk. *eusebeia* = Lt. *pietas*) (e.g. Epictetus. *Ench*. 31, 32).

With the increased uncertainties about the nature and role of rational man in an ordered cosmos, Hellenistic philosophical investigations were increasingly replaced by practical concerns with ethics, the rule and exercise of life that might offer a viable view of human existence in face of both cosmological and socio-political transitoriness and transformation. Philosophical *theoria* was replaced, in other words, by *praxis*. This increased focus upon practical ethics during the Hellenistic period established philosophers as exemplars and their followers as members of philosophical 'schools'. Unlike the Pythagorean initiatory groups, however, the third-century CE writer Diogenes Laertius described these Hellenistic philosophical schools simply as 'successions' (*diadochai*) (1.13–15). Admission to these 'successions' was basically an intellectual commitment to accept and to follow the teachings and traditions of a particular thinker, and to emulate his lifestyle. For example, the followers of Epicurus (341–270 BCE), who, like Pythagoras was from Samos, first met in the secluded garden of his home in Athens, the meeting place that gave its name to Epicurean groups. Epicurean 'Gardens', introduced to the Roman world by Lucretius (*c*.94–55 or 51?) through his magisterial poem, *On the Nature of Things*, soon spread throughout the Greek world and subsequently developed branches in Egypt, Asia, Mytilene, and Lampsacus. As such, the Epicurean schools—to which women were admitted as equals alongside men—epitomized the cosmopolitan and inclusive values of the larger Hellenistic world. Nevertheless, Epicurus and his followers rejected the allure of internationalization, opting instead for small, alternative associations of philosophers bound by the ideal of friendship.

The popular successes of Hellenistic philosophies, such as Epicureanism, were bought at the price of forsaking the physicalist tradition associated with Aristotle. This intellectual lapse, popularized in modern judgement as 'a failure of nerve' (Murray 1955), was initiated by a return to Platonic metaphysics, a tradition that can be traced from the first-century BCE pseudo-Platonic dialogue *Axiochus* until its highpoint in the third-century neo-Platonism of Plotinus. Followers of the neo-Platonic tradition considered themselves kin with deity (the One) based on the Platonic ideal of *homoiōsis theō* ('likeness to god', Plato, *Theaet*. 176B), a view influential among the religious traditions of late antiquity, especially some of the mystery traditions and the gnostics.

Hellenistic 'Mystery' Cults

Whereas the *philosophiai* moved away from their earlier quasi-religious organization requiring initiation to more intellectual (if still pious) 'successions', some others of the early associations organized as social groups of ethnic 'brothers' (Gk: *ethnē* = 'race', 'people'—'a foreign people' from the Graeco-Roman perspective).

Some of these ethnic-based groups, who had lost contact with their natural kin, legitimated their association by claims to the authority of a particular (native or ethnic) patron deity, and some adopted a rhetoric of exclusivity or secrecy to establish their alterity from the growing profusion of other such groups as well as from the growing hegemony of the cosmopolitan state and its ideal of homogeneous citizenship.

As successive Hellenistic-Roman empires established a more or less cosmopolitan culture around the Mediterranean basin, membership in ethnic-based groups waned as they lost their ethnically defined adherents and, consequently began to recruit a wider membership in order to maintain their transgenerational identity. Newly initiated members into the religio-social *ethnē* were considered fictive kin. By the second century CE, some of the religio-social brotherhoods began to define themselves as 'mysteries', a designation initially attested with reference to the initiatory festivals of the Great Gods in Samothrace and those of Demeter at Eleusis. It was from among such associations that the Hellenistic 'mystery cults' developed and spread throughout the Graeco-Roman world.

As with ancient Greek practices, initiation into the so-called Hellenistic mystery cults were neither adolescent 'coming-of-age rituals'—initiates were consenting adults—nor, as is more commonly viewed in much modern scholarship, some sort of individual mystical experience or secret transmission of occult knowledge to new recruits. Much effort has been devoted to 'decoding' the surviving evidence of these cults to discover the enigmatic 'wisdom from the East' that these traditions supposedly preserved and transmitted. However, given the literally tens of thousands of initiates into, for example, the Eleusinian cult of Demeter from throughout the Greek world and, subsequently, from throughout the Roman Empire for more than eight hundred years, and given what is now known about robust cognitive proclivities for humans to gossip (Dunbar 1996), it is improbable that these cults involved the preservation and transmission of any corpus of knowledge, secret or otherwise. This attribution of secret knowledge to the mystery cults seems to have been an influence on history of religions scholarship by Enlightenment presumptions that the mysteries were places where an elite might receive privileged knowledge, a view augmented by the nineteenth-century fascination with the occult, by, for example, the theosophical movement headed by Madam Blavatsky. Rather, the Graeco-Roman 'mystery' cults were simply religious groups that, like any social institution, required an admission process. It was, however, the nature of their initiation rites (Gk: *mysteria* = Lt: *initia*) by which these 'mystery' groups became *defined*.

Generalizations about initiations into the mysteries, despite historical differences between them, are possible for two reasons: first of all, the development of the Graeco-Roman mysteries seems to have been based generally upon those of Demeter, celebrated at Eleusis, and, second, cognitive anthropologists have now afforded a positive theoretical basis for comparing the initiation rites of the Graeco-Roman mysteries with those of so-called 'primitive' societies, the morphological parallels of which had already been described by early twentieth-century scholars (e.g. Raffaele Pettazzoni 1923).

The Eleusinian Mysteries of Demeter

The Eleusinian Mysteries of Demeter provide the example *par excellence* of initiation into the Graeco-Roman mystery cults. The well-known (and often-cited) *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (seventh century BCE) is the primary source for the myth of Demeter, although its relationship to the cult practices of Eleusis is contested. Reconstructions of initiation rites into the Eleusinian mysteries are better based on archaeological evidence (see, e.g. Mylonas 1961; Clinton 1992), which, however, generally accords with this *Hymn*. Its story of Demeter's daughter, Persephone, being abducted by Hades, god of the underworld, and subsequently reunited with her mother suggests an agricultural background for the annual celebration of her rites in the fertile Eleusinian plain. Eleusinian iconography suggests that the Mysteries of Demeter initially involved aspirations for wealth—the fertile plains of Eleusis were the 'bread basket' of Attica—and, subsequently, for happiness in this life (i.e. *olbios; Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 480–2) rather than concerns about blessings in an afterlife.

Despite various scholarly attempts to identify 'pre-Hellenic' Mycenaean derivations for the 'Mysteries' of Demeter, the cult seems to have been established in Eleusis as that of one or two noble families (*genē*), the *Eumolpidae* (*Homeric Hymn* 154–6) and the *Kērykes* (Pausanias 1.38.3). These two families formed hieratic castes, the dynastic members of which (the *gennētai*) presided over the cult, which, presumably, was organized as a fictive kin association. The implication is that membership in such a particular *genos* might be conferred by adoption (i.e. by initiation). At least one source indicates that initiation into this *genos* was understood as kinship with the deity herself. According to the pseudo-Platonic dialogue *Axiochus*, Axiochus became 'kin to the gods' as a consequence of his initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries (371D). Initiation into this fictive kin association was open to all citizens of Eleusis, providing, therefore, one *raison d'ĕtre* for the collective identity of that state. With the annexation of Eleusis into the Athenian state of Attica (during the eighth or seventh century BCE), invitation to the Mysteries became extended to all Athenian citizens.

In recognition of Athenian political dominance, initiation into the Mysteries of Eleusis began with rites at the Eleusinion in Athens, where a 'lesser mysteries' was celebrated each spring. Such processions from ruling centres to cult place were a procedure typically followed in the spread of cults closely identified with their locale.

Eleusinian Initiations

In the latter part of September, potential initiates preceded by torchlight along the 'Sacred Way' from Athens to Eleusis, the primary road between Athens and Eleusis then as now, for initiation into the 'Greater Mysteries'. Upon arriving in Eleusis, initiation into the Greater Mysteries was preceded by a preparatory period of rest and fasting, a somatic deprivation that would have heightened the sensory effects of the imminent initiatory rites and contributed to their salient character. At dusk, initiates would break their fast by drinking the sacred beverage of the cult, the *kykeon* (= 'mixture'; *Homeric Hymn* 205–8), possibly a fermented or even a psychotropic beverage. As night descended, the now cognitively disoriented initiates entered the sacred precincts of Demeter where they were led by torchlight past the Ploutonion, a grotto in the hillside dramatically presented to them as the dreadful entrance into the Underworld, and, then, on into the Telesterion, or the 'House of Initiation', the place of initiation proper.

In the darkened Telesterion, initiates were blindfolded, further contributing to a cognitive disorientation that was heightened even further by such sensory buffetings as the acoustical anomaly of a gong sounded from the midst of the darkness and the pungent odour of now extinguished torches. The Eleusinian 'night of the mysteries' culminated, according to Plutarch, with an abrupt burst of brilliant light that accompanied the sudden emergence of the presiding Hierophant from the darkness (Plutarch, *Mor*. 81E; also Hippolytus, *Haer*. 5.8.40).

The fourth-century CE philosopher Themistius reflected on the initiatory rites at Eleusis as a wandering 'through the dark' in which 'come all the terrors before the final initiation, shuddering, trembling, sweating, amazement'. Themistius concludes that when the initiates emerged from their initiatory ordeals of darkness into revelatory light, they were 'received into pure regions and meadows, with voices and dances and the majesty of holy sounds and shapes' (Themistius, in Stobaeus, *Flor*. 4; Mylonas 1961: 246–65). Initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries, in other words, employed somatic, sensual, and visual effects that established the now cognitively vulnerable initiates as socially related (potentially) to all Eleusinian initiates.

The levels of the Eleusinian initiations, according to some accounts, were three: a purifying initiation into the Lesser Mysteries in Athens (*catharmos*), and two levels of initiation into the Great Mysteries in Eleusis, the *myēsis* (initiation proper) and a higher grade of initiation, the *epopteia* ('the seeing', 'disclosure', or revelation), which, presumably, involved the communication of information through the iconography of the site (Mylonas 1961: 239).

The sole requirement for initiation in the Mysteries of Demeter throughout its history (apart from such practical necessities as sufficient funds to travel to Eleusis, a per diem, and the expense for providing for the required sacrifices), was that the initiates should not have taken human life and that they should speak Greek—the latter being the same linguistic criterion that defined the social boundary between Greek and barbarian generally. Thus, initiation into the Eleusinian community generally supported social kin-claims of 'Greekness', an identity subsequently offered to all speakers of the Greek language.

Alexander the Great reputedly defined his Greek-speaking empire as one of 'the brotherhood of mankind' (the 'prayer for the unity of mankind', reported by Arrian, *Anab*. 7.11). Whether or not such a programme was ever actually advanced by Alexander, Hellenistic romances about him clearly propagated this value in his name. Thus, the first-century BCE historian Diodorus Siculus wrote that Alexander's 'last plans' were to bring together the largest continents through intermarriage and ties of kinship into common harmony and family ties (18.4.4). Similarly Plutarch averred that Alexander 'instructed all men to consider the inhabited world to be their native land . . . being blended together by ties of blood and the bearing of children' (Plutarch, *De Alex. fort*. 1.329 C–D; Austin 2006: 58). To this extent, the continuing popularity of the Eleusinian cult during the period following the conquests of Alexander furthered his programme of Hellenization, and that of his successors, in support of a pan-Hellenism based on the cognitive attractions and relational inferences of kinship psychology.

The significance of initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries became altered as its political and demographic context expanded from local family association into a central cult of the Athenian State, and further, into a celebrated Pan-Hellenic institution. Initiations into the cult, still under the dynastic jurisdiction of the *Eumolpidae*, morphed from admission into the *solidarity* of an intimate, small-scale fictive kin association into an *identity* with a large-scale 'imagined community' in support of pan-Greek comity. During the period of Roman Republic, privileges of initiation into this once Greek identity were extended to all Roman citizens.

The shift from the earlier Greek cult of Demeter to its Roman expansion mirrored a transition from a locative cult, centred entirely in the Eleusinian *polis*, to a cosmopolitan utopia ('no place'), a shift necessitated by the geographical expanse of Roman imperial rule and by the so-called Ptolemaic cosmological revolution. As a locative cult, the mythological topography of the Eleusinian site replicated the traditional three-story cosmos. The Telesterion was set into a 'mountain' (actually a large hill) between its heavenly summit and the entrance to the Underworld. Initiation into the 'sphere of influence' of this cosmological myth was co-extensive with that of the successive political entities in which it was located: Eleusis, Attica, Greece.

Supported by imperial patronage—especially by Hadrian (emperor 117–138), Antonius Pius (emperor 138–161), and Marcus Aurelius (emperor 161–180)—celebration of the Eleusinian Mysteries was expanded throughout the Roman period and retained a widespread popular appeal (Cicero, *Leg*. 2.14, 36). However, the cosmopolitan landscape of Roman political and cosmological expanse vitiated the distinctively local or ethnic ('Hellenic') overtones for Eleusinian initiation as its traditional identifying status was increasingly superseded by the polity of Roman citizenship. Rather, initiations into the Eleusinian Mysteries during the Roman period seem to have developed into more of a fashionable tourist pursuit rather than a rite conferring religio-ethnic identity and fortune, analogous, perhaps, to the weekly papal blessing conferred today upon the curious throngs, secular as well as sacred, who crowd St Peter's Square on Sunday mornings.

Like all non-Christian worship, the Eleusinian Mysteries were terminated by the anti-pagan decrees of Emperor Theodosius in the final decade of the fourth century.

Roman 'Mystery' Cults

Many Romans, like modern Westerners, were attracted to 'Eastern wisdom traditions', a popular attraction that dated, at least, from the attribution of universal wisdom to Pythagoras as the consequence of his purported travels in Egypt (e.g. Momigliano 1993 [1971]: 146–50). And, as in the modern West, a number of Eastern or 'Oriental' cults (so-called) came to characterize the Roman religious landscape. Many of these cults were imported from Greece and other of Rome's Eastern provinces, e.g. those of Dionysus from Thrace, of Cybele from Phrygia, of Atargatis from Syria, of Jupiter Dolechenus from Commagene, and of Isis from Egypt, whereas others, while claiming an Eastern provenance, were created from within a Roman context, e.g. the cult of Glycon purportedly from ancient Greece (Lucian, *Alex.*), and the Roman Cult of Mithras with its inferences of Persian imprimatur. These were all organized as small-scale associations, some widely-disseminated, and some of which expressed themselves through greater or lesser claims of secrecy. As with the Hellenistic mystery cults, the Roman mysteries were defined by their initiatory rites. The Isis cult offers a good example of an important cult that was imported from the East and which developed 'mysteries' by the second century CE, and those of Mithras, a Western creation from the same period.

The Mysteries of Isis

Isis had been familiar to Greeks since the fifth century BCE when Herodotus identified the Egyptian goddess with Demeter (*Hist.* 2.42, 48, 145). Initially Isis associations in Greece offered camaraderie for expatriate Egyptian traders and travellers while their patron deity offered protection for their voyages over water. From the early fourth century BCE, for example, an Isis association of Egyptian merchants is documented in Piraeus, the port of Athens. By the third century BCE, cults of a Hellenized Isis appeared along the Greek coast and on some of the Greek islands, e.g. Delos, and, by the first century BCE, Diodorus Siculus could write that cults of Isis had spread throughout 'practically the entire inhabited world' (1.25.4).

Some of the public cults of Isis, influenced by the popular Eleusinian mysteries, developed their own 'Mysteries of Isis'. Plutarch, for example, writes that Timotheus, a Hierophant of the Eumolpidae family, had been summoned from Eleusis by Ptolemy Soter of Egypt (367/6–283 BCE) in order to assist the king in propagating a new cult of Serapis as Isis' consort (Plutarch, *De Is. et Os.* 28). The Isis cults retained an Egyptian 'aura' by employing Egyptian iconic motifs in their temples and by displaying sacred books presumably written in Egyptian hieroglyphics, a language that, according to the

second-century CE neo-Platonic writer, Apuleius, was 'impossible to be read' by non-initiates (Apuleius, *Metam*. 11.22).

The Hellenistic development of Isis mystery cults was occasioned when the ethnic rationale for membership in her associations was no longer credible because of assimilation, mobility, or of a decline in the continuing immigration of Egyptian natives. Consequently, recruitment of new members required an initiatory conferral of ethnic/kinship status upon non-ethnic petitioners. As explained by Apuleius in his Hellenistic romance, *Metamorphoses* (or *The Golden Ass*), membership in the Mysteries of Isis was no longer attainable by birth or by inheritance (11.15) but only by an initiatory rebirth (11.16, 21) in which Isis became recognized as the initiate's spiritual mother and the presiding priest of Isis as his spiritual father (11.25; see also DeMaris, Chapter 22 in this volume).

Unlike the Mysteries of Demeter, which retained its traditional cult centre at Eleusis to which people had to travel if they desired to become initiates, local Mysteries of Isis were widely established.

In his Hellenistic romance, *Metamorphoses* (or *The Golden Ass*), Apuleius, who shared the name Lucius with the protagonist of his novel, gives an autobiographical (?) if literary account of (his own?) initiation into the Mysteries of Isis in her temple at the Greek port of Cenchreae. According to Apuleius, Lucius had been transformed into an ass by meddling in magic. Following a series of fantastic asinine adventures, he subsequently became initiated into the Mysteries of Isis and restored to full humanity.

Initiation into the mysteries of Isis, like those of Demeter, was multiple: initiates were first initiated into the 'mysteries of Isis' (Apuleius, *Metam*. 11. 21–3), and then into a second 'mysteries of Osiris' (11.27), and, finally, into a less understood 'third order of religion', perhaps an amalgamated Mysteries of Isis *and* Osiris? (11.29). Following a preparatory period of purification and fasting (11.21), prospective initiates into each of these mystery grades were selected by the Goddess herself through dreams that were primed for and received in nocturnal sojourns in an Isis Temple. Although Isiac initiations were not usually held in darkened chambers, they were performed at night and were accompanied by the exotic sounds of the Egyptian sistrum, a kind of rhythmic rattle or noise maker (11.4). The initiate's visual senses were further aroused by the brilliantly coloured and visually arresting pseudo-Egyptian symbols employed by the Hellenized cult. And, similar to Themistius' description of Eleusinian initiation, Apuleius writes that, after initiates 'came to the boundary of death, and having trodden the threshold of Proserpina', they saw 'in the middle of the night … the sun flashing with bright light' as they 'came face to face with the gods below and the gods above' (11.23).

Whereas the Hellenized cult of Isis, like that of the Eleusinian Mysteries, retained its character of conferring fictive kinship, at least in its initiatory discourse, Isis was progressively re-represented from her native character as 'Queen of Egypt', a locative Mother goddess associated, like Demeter, with fertility, to her Hellenized, international status as 'mistress of every land' (e.g. the Kyme aretalogy in Streete 2000), to, finally, a cosmopolitan mystery-deity as 'universal queen of heaven' (*Metam*. 11.2, 5). Initiation into

a Mysteries of Isis involved, in other words, not only adoption into the 'ethnic' circle of fictive Egyptians and the acquisition of a pseudo-'Egyptian identity'—similar to that of the modern Shriners (formerly, the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine)—but also protection for her clientele in the universalized context of cosmology and in the international environment of empire. In contrast to the Graeco-Roman problematic of life governed by a cosmic rule of chance or *fortuna* (*Metam* 11.5), Isis was portrayed as the beneficent 'Good Fortune' that 'is not blind, but can see' (11.15) and who, consequently, offered initiates, as did Demeter her initiates, a bountiful human happiness.

The Mysteries of Mithras

Whereas the Eleusinian mysteries offer a good example of initiation into an ancient Greek mystery and the cult of Isis into one imported from the East and transformed into a Graeco-Roman mystery, the Roman Mysteries of Mithras offer a good example of religious innovation during the Roman era. Created in the late first century CE somewhere within the boundaries of Roman Empire, this extensive cult is widely documented throughout the empire from the second through the fourth century CE, when, like all non-Christian religions, it succumbed to Theodosius' prohibitions. Whatever the historical origins of Roman Mithraism, it is clear that it was one of the 'new' religions of the empire. They were not explicitly modelled on the Mysteries of Demeter, as were the Mysteries of Isis, but they were nevertheless influenced by a Romanized *idea* of mysteries as popularized by the trendy mystique of the Eleusinian Mysteries in their Roman imperial revision and exemplified by Lucian of Samosata's second-century CE satire of the Mysteries of Glycon (*Alex.*).

Mithraists, it seems, produced no texts and, consequently shared no consolidated standard for a doctrinal or mythological commonality. Rather, Mithraism was a distribution of small, decentralized cells documented by archaeological finds from over 700 *mithraea* or Mithraic temples distributed throughout the Roman world. They are clustered especially in Rome and its vicinity as well as along the borders of the empire, especially along Hadrian's Wall in Britain, and along the Rhine, the Danube, and Rome's eastern frontier. Based on the size of *mithraea*, the average membership of a Mithraic cell was thirty-five, again confirming predictions of the social brain hypothesis.

Whereas there were three stages of initiation into the Eleusinian and Isiac Mysteries, there were seven into the Mithraic, from an initial grade of 'raven', through *nymphus*, 'soldier', 'lion', 'Persian', *Heliodromus*, to the highest grade of Father (Jerome, *Epist*. 107.2; confirmed, e.g. in the aisle mosaic of the Filicissimus Mithraeum at Ostia), although the distinctive character or role of each of these is unclear. Under the local leadership of the 'Father', the Mithraic cells, similar to other fictive kinship groups of the Hellenistic period, were organized as brotherhoods. Initiation into this brotherhood, consequently, had overtones of adoption into a Mithraic 'family lineage', a fictive genealogy that claimed origination with the Persian deity, Mithras, and, according to the name of the fifth stage of initiation, *Perses* ('Persian'), conferred upon initiates, as with those of

Isis, a fictive ethnic identity. All Mithraic *fratres* were, in principle, eligible to achieve the highest grade of initiation, the local *Pater* being functionally equivalent to a Priest of Isis, and to preside, thereby, over his own Mithraic cell, facilitating thereby the possibility for further spread of the cult.

Although there was no administrative centre for the distribution of Mithraic groups which might govern unifying doctrines or beliefs, the Mithraic groups seem to have shared a broad similarity of fictive kin identity. In addition, the cults were identified by the shared architectural principles of their *mithraea* and by the ubiquitous presence of the tauroctony, the central cult image of Mithras slaying a bull. The imagery of both employs an astrologically structured cosmology that was an alternative to the mathematically incomprehensible astronomical cosmology epitomized by Ptolemy.

According to Porphyry, one of the few texts referencing Mithraism, every *mithraeum* was an 'image of the cosmos' (*De Antr. nymph*. 29). Archaeological evidence confirms that they were constructed in caves or rooms made to resemble caves, which, with their vaulted ceilings were often decorated with planets and stars. When initiates proceeded progressively through the seven grades of initiation rites held in these mithraea, they symbolically ascended a seven-runged ladder with which the cosmic spheres were identified (as again exemplified by the aisle mosaic of the Felicissimus Mithraeum at Ostia). Thus, Mithraic initiates ritually transcended this-worldly existence with its cosmic and social problematics to enter symbolically into the eighth, hypercosmic heaven.

Initiation rites in the Mithraeum also took place before the tauroctony. This sacrificial image of a mundane Mithras slaying a domestic bull has also been identified as a 'star-map' with a celestial Mithras dominating each of its constituent astrological images, e.g. the dog, cup, scorpion, bull, each representing selected signs of the zodiac that were precisely positioned with respect to the celestial equator. The sacrifice of a domestic animal by Mithras would include inferences of transitoriness, especially, the existential reality of mundane life and ultimate death. For the predominantly military membership of Mithraism and those in service to the empire, this reminder of the ephemerality of existence could have been a poignant experience. On the other hand, the tauroctony, as astrological star-map presided over by *Mithras Sol Invictus*, represented for the initiates a hypercosmic promise.

As with popular visual illusions generally, the human visual system is unable to process incompatible representations simultaneously and the tauroctony's ambiguous significance would have triggered among initiates a mental state of cognitive dissonance, a contradictory cognitive disorientation resulting in experiences of discomfort. A resolution of such incongruities by viewing the ambiguity of the tauroctony as a serial but reiterated representation of mundane existence transcended by celestial promise seems to be central to the Mithraic initiatory experience. Mithraism thus shared with neo-Platonism a soteriological goal of the soul's cosmic transcendence (see the references to Mithraism by the neo-Platonist Porphyry, *Antr. nymph*. 5–6, 15, 18, 20 and 24, and in Origen, *C. Cels*. 6.22).

The vividly painted scenes of initiation on the walls of the Mithraeum of Capua Vetere in southern Italy give some idea of the dramatic ordeals with which Mithraic initiates were threatened within the darkened depths of the Mithraic 'cosmic cave'.

In the first of these scenes, a blindfolded initiate is depicted as bound and naked, as menaced by sword and by fire, and as undergoing a symbolic death. Similarly, in an initiatory scene on a cup discovered in a *mithraeum* in Mainz, the initiating Father aims an arrow from his drawn bow directly at the head of the initiate who is portrayed as smaller, naked, and vulnerable. Such scenes recall Tertullian's description of Mithraic initiation as a 'mimicry of martyrdom' (*Cor*. 15.4). The third and fourth panels of the Capua Vetere scenes of initiation are damaged but the final panel shows the initiate with his blindfold removed, presumably now to stand, like initiates in the Eleusinian and Isiac Mysteries, in the luminous presence of his deity, *Mithras Sol Invictus*.

Conclusion: Initiatory Functions, Ritual Form, and the Mind of Initiates

The social brain hypothesis predicts that *H. sapiens* are born into groups constrained by size and regulated by genetic kin selection. Under the socio-political conditions of large-scale societies, such as the vast geographical and cosmological spatial expansion characteristic of the Hellenistic era, humans chose to become members of small-scale groups alternative to those of their birth or citizenship. Membership in such voluntary associations, especially those with religio-social objectives like the Graeco-Roman mystery cults, was often certified through rites of initiation based on juridical processes of adoption, undergird by a psychology of kinship, and legitimated by the authority of a patron deity.

Initiatory Functions

Studies of initiation rites, from Arnold van Gennep (1909) to Catherine Bell (1992), have emphasized the social functions of religious ritual. In his classic *Les rites de passage* (1909), for example, ethnographer van Gennep famously argued that initiation rites mark a change in one type of socially defined status to another (1960: 3). This change of status is, first of all, from outsider to insider; in the case of the Graeco-Roman mystery cults, into the status of fictive kinship. Subsequently, this change of status is differentiated by hierarchical levels of status within the group. Initiates into the Eleusinian mysteries, for example, who had completed the highest grade of initiation, the *epopteia*, must have been accorded differential status from the *mystēs*, whether that relationship was actual or ceremonial. For Bell, ' "ritualization" is a strategic way of acting in specific social situations'. Consequently, a study of initiation 'casts a new light on the purpose [function] of ritual activity, its social efficacy, and its embodiment in complex traditions and systems', especially its entanglement in structures of power (Bell 1992: 67).

Social-functional analyses of initiation rites are most certainly of significance in describing the status attributed to or ascribed to the initiate in particular historical contexts. Yet such functionalist analyses not only neglect the differing functions of all participants in rites of initiation—that of the initiate but also that of the initiator along with that (if any) of already initiated members of the group that were present for the rites—but offer no explanation for the initiatory practices themselves as well as for the universally recurrent forms or patterns of performance that allow these rites to be profitably compared.

Ritual Form

E. Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley (1990) have argued that rituals are fundamentally ordinary forms of a universal human action representation system in which an agent acts upon a patient or vice versa. This system is represented linguistically by the syntactic relationship between subject, verb, and object. It is represented religiously, however, when a deity or an authorized surrogate of the deity is understood to be actor or agent of the ritual (special agent rituals) or as the recipient of the action (special patient rituals). Initiations into religious groups are examples of special agent rituals. The Eleusinian hierophant, for example, was the *authorized* agent of initiation because of his (claimed) descent from Eumolpos and because of his (claimed) kinship with Demeter. The Priests of Isis seem, initially, to have been sanctioned 'professionals' who travelled to the Greek world from the 'official' centre of the cult in Alexandria. Subsequent Greek Priests of Isis could either be a permanent, hereditary office or a temporary role. During the imperial period, Priestesses were also documented at the Isis temples. It remains unclear whether the agents of initiation into the Mysteries of Isis were differentiated from the Priests of Isis that presided over the public cults. The authorized agent of initiation for the Roman cult of Mithras was the *Pater* (or, presumably, whichever member of the local cell had achieved the highest grade of Mithraic initiation).

Because initiations into religious groups were understood to be by authority of a superhuman agent, they are considered to be non-repeatable (for any particular initiatory level or grade). Once initiated, initiates are considered admitted to their new social status. Such initiatory rites are costly, both economically, as sacrificial animals and initiation fees must be paid for, as well as cognitively, as the mental states of initiates are altered along with their ascribed religio-social status.

The Mind of Initiates

Initiations into the Graeco-Roman religions have been identified by cognitive anthropologists as characteristic of 'imagistic' groups, in which initiations are characterized by ritual practices that employ elevated levels of sensory pageantry. These imagistic groups are in contrast to 'doctrinal' groups, in which the meanings of the rituals are understood from

a defined or 'orthodox' set of teachings (Whitehouse 2004). Initiation into the Graeco-Roman mysteries did not involve any doctrinal catechesis but was rather a ritual process of cognitive transformation, founded upon emotive experiences evoked by deliberately choreographed rituals of arousal. The experiences induced by the initiatory rites of the Graeco-Roman mysteries can be characterized as generally involving an emotionally charged sense of cognitive disorientation and vulnerability followed by experiences of (initiatory) rebirth—as summarized by Themistius for the Eleusinian rites and by Apuleius for the Isiac.

All of the Graeco-Roman mystery initiations employed vivid and symbolic colours, unusual masks and costumes, esoteric imagery, and exotic sounds that would have contributed to a cognitive disorientation of initiates. Cognitive scientists have shown that such highly affective events of sensory pageantry, enhanced by practices of somatic deprivations, are encoded in the episodic (or autobiographical) memory of individual initiates. As initiates recall and reflect upon such elaborately staged events and attempt to make sense of their dramatic, even bizarre, occurrences, they share their presumptive meanings with fellow initiates, constructing, thereby, an interpretation common to the circle of their fellow initiates. This constructed meaning remains, however, salient only for that local groups.

While the capacity of dramatic imagery and sensory displays, such as those employed in the initiation rites of the Graeco-Roman mysteries, to convey information was limited because they were semantically equivocal, such imagery and displays have the inferential power effectively to elicit experiences and to trigger emotional responses. The cognitively disorienting experiences of stress and fear would have rendered the initiates psychologically susceptible to the initiatory goals of any particular group and would have created powerful memories associated with those goals. Thus, initiatory rites not only established a costly and memorable commitment to the solidarity of the group into which they were initiated but also induced 'revelations' of meaning associated with membership in that group.

Afterword: Early Christian initiation and That of the Graeco-Roman Mysteries

The initiation rite of the early Christian groups was baptism (Thomassen 2003; see also DeMaris, Chapter 22 in this volume). This practice is documented not only from the synoptic gospels (Matt. 3:1–17; Mark 1:2–11; Luke 3:1–22), from *Q*, one of the sources for the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (Matt. 3:7–10//Luke 3:7–9), from the Lukan book of Acts (Acts 2:38–41), from the Gospel of John (John 1:15–34) and the epistles of Paul (1 Cor. 12:13), but also from the non-canonical Jewish-Christian *Gospel of the Ebionites*, the Gospel of Thomas (46), and in representations from early Christian material culture

(Snyder 2003: 77, 111–22). As with the Roman cult of Mithras, the early Christianities were decentralized associations with no official authorities that might regulate any sort of 'orthodox' understanding for this rite. Rather, like the Graeco-Roman mystery cults, these early Christian groups proliferated as small, face-to-face associations in which converts shared little else but baptismal performances together with remarkably plastic claims to various representations of Jesus—whether as teacher or wonderworker, as martyr or deity.

The same sources that document the widespread practice of baptism among the early Christianities also modelled this rite on the 'imagistic' practices of John the Baptist (see also Josephus, *Ant*. 18, 116–19). As with the mysteries, preparations for these Christian rites included such practices as nocturnal fasts and vigils (Hippolytus, *Trad. ap*. 20.7), followed by the baptism of naked initiates (21.3, 11). In addition, Christian baptism included such specifically Christian practices as recognizing and confessing sins (Tertullian, *Bapt*. 20; Justin Martyr, *Apol*. 1.61), daily exorcisms, and renunciations of the devil (Tertullian, *Cor*. 3; Hippolytus, *Trad. ap*. 20.3, 4, 8; 21.9–10).

There is no evidence that early Christians borrowed from or were directly influenced by the initiation rites of contemporaneous Roman cults. Similarities between differing religious groups sharing a cultural context can often be accounted for by varying perspectives on common cultural problematics. The popular attraction of the Christian rite of initiation, as with those of the Hellenistic mystery religions, was that they provided relief from, and a complementary supplement to, the repetitious ritual tedium of official Roman religion. And, initiation rites were notably absent from the official Roman system apart from a few public recognitions, such as boys taking their *toga virilis* upon reaching the age of puberty (Ovid, *Fast*. 3. 771–90; see also Dolansky, Chapter 10 in this volume).

What sharply differentiated Christian initiation rites from those of the Graeco-Roman mysteries was their exclusivity (Martin 2014). Whereas initiation into the mystery religions was non-exclusive—many were initiated into several such groups even as in the modern world many are members of a number of special-interest groups—initiates into the Christian groups were forbidden to become members of any other religious association, including those devoted to a religio-patriotic allegiance to the Emperor. The baptismal renunciations of the devil included repudiation of those 'false' patron deities into whose associations the prospective Christian might previously have been initiated (Assmann 2010: 119). This repudiation, considered by Roman contemporaries to be atheism, was based upon the resolute rejection by Judaism of all gods but their own 'true' god as idolatry (e.g. Deut. 5.7, 6.4) and the uncompromising embrace of this strict monotheistic imperative by the early Christianities (e.g. Mark 12:29, Luke 10:27, Gal. 3:20, 1 Cor. 8:4, Eph. 4:6, Did. 5:1, 6:3).

After the second or third generation, as more and more Christians were born into the faith, 'doctrinal' practices of *catecheses* displaced the centrality of baptismal practices in the developing trajectories of some of the early Christianities (Did. 7:1, 11:1), As a result, baptismal practices of somatic and cognitive stimulation became somewhat deflated as they were replaced by catechetical instruction, confirmation, and by the

increasingly 'central' rite of the Eucharist. These catechetical practices were interpreted and regulated by an increasingly shared orthodoxy (Martin 2009). Nevertheless, some of the catechetical traditions retained traditional preparatory practices for baptism (Did. 7:4). Tertullian, at the end of the second century, could still compare Christian baptism with the traumatic rites of initiation into the Roman cult of Mithras (*De bapt*. 5; *De praescr. haeret*. 40). And, initiates into the Christian groups were still understood, as in the Mithraic mysteries, to be the 'adopted sons' (or 'children') of a Father God (Rom. 8:23, Gal. 4:5).

Acknowledgements

This chapter draws on discussion from earlier publications, especially Martin 1997, 2000, 2005, and 2014.

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CHAPTER 20

MORTUARY RITUALS

ANNE KATRINE DE HEMMER GUDME

Introduction: Early Christian Mortuary Rituals

Humanity's relationship with death is characterized by paradoxes. Death is the big universal, it comes to us all, and it is sometimes described as the only certain thing in life. At the same time, death is the great unknown, the object of countless hopes, fears, and beliefs; it is a threshold to something that we have no knowledge of. All known human cultures respond to death with ritual actions, and ritual disposal of the dead can be traced back to our earliest human ancestors. Nevertheless, the ways in which humans dispose of their dead is incredibly diverse, even within the same cultural system (Metcalf and Huntingdon 1991: 75; Davies 2002: 24–42; Andrews and Bello 2006). On the one hand, death is the only thing that is truly and indisputably common to the experience of being human across divides of time, culture, and geography. On the other hand, humanity's reactions to death are incredibly varied and multifaceted.

In a way we know very little about how the early Christians in the first centuries CE responded to death. The literary sources that we do have are very uncommunicative on this particular topic and although funerary archaeological evidence is exceedingly abundant in the Roman era, it has proven difficult, if not impossible, to isolate a distinctly Christian archaeology earlier than the third century (Volp 2002: 99–102; Bowes 2008). However, we do know quite a lot about mortuary ritual practices among the Romans and the Jews, and therefore we have the means to create a thick description of mortuary rituals in the cultural environment in which early Christianity emerged.[1] The

[1] The terms 'Christian' and 'Jewish' are used here only because of a lack of a better alternative and in order to achieve brevity and clarity at the expense of precise analytical and terminological accuracy. I fully agree with Richard DeMaris (2008: 11–12) that since these religions were going through their formative phases during the first centuries CE there was no such thing as a Jew or a Christian at this time. The reality rather corresponded with the messiness described below. I have chosen not to use

aim of this chapter is to give a theoretical and empirical introduction to mortuary rituals in the ancient Mediterranean in the first centuries CE in order to contextualize the mortuary ritual practices of the early Christians. The assumption behind this approach is that for the first two to three centuries or more, the early Christian ritual response to death differed very little or not at all from that of their neighbours (MacMullen 2009: 25). This is consistent with the emerging consensus on early Christian mortuary rituals and burial practices, which stresses cultural continuity, fluid religious identities, and the importance of practices over beliefs (Bowes 2008; Rebillard 2015). This current view is in contrast with earlier research that assumed a distinct and discernible Christian identity and material culture as a reflection of a fully formed and widely disseminated Christian belief system.[2] The image of early Christianity that emerges in the wake of the new consensus is 'messy'. It embraces mixed burials, tombstones with a disorienting mix of Jewish, Christian, and Roman symbols, and a community of early Christians that dined and celebrated in the cemeteries alongside their non-Christian neighbours. It is to this delightful messiness that we now turn.

Mortuary Rituals

The term 'mortuary rituals' encompasses all kinds of death-related ritual practices, including preparation and disposal of the dead body, mourning, commemoration, and habitual and occasional visits to the tomb of the deceased (Schmidt 1996: 5). If we follow Catherine Bell's categorization of ritual behaviour into 'Basic Genres of Ritual Action', mortuary rituals include both rites of passage (e.g. the funeral and mourning), rites of exchange and communion (e.g. giving gifts to the dead), rites of affliction (e.g. purification), calendrical rites (e.g. annual days of commemoration), and finally feasting, fasting, and festival (e.g. commemorative feasts) (Bell 1997: 93–137; Grimes 2000: 219–22). As such, mortuary rituals comprise a wide variety of ritual genres, but they are often emphasized as rites of passage, a category of rituals that mark or even bring about social transformation in the life of individuals through stages of separation, transition, and reintegration (van Gennep 1960; Bell 1997: 94–102; Grimes 2000: 5–8).

The work of two early twentieth-century sociologists, Arnold van Gennep and Robert Hertz, has particularly influenced scholars' understanding of mortuary

the term 'Pagan' to describe what MacMullen (2009) refers to as the 'traditional' non-Christian and non-Jewish religion. Instead, I shall use simply 'Roman religion', although it can be argued that the latter encompasses both early Jewish and early Christian religion in the first centuries CE, for a further discussion of terminology, see Salzman (2008).

[2] Contrast, e.g. Rush (1941) with Rebillard (2009) and MacMullen (2009). For an interesting discussion of Jewish and Christian iconography, see Kraemer (1991).

rituals as rites of passage. Both van Gennep and Hertz stressed the importance of mortuary rituals (especially funerals and mourning) in the transition of the deceased from the world of the living to the world of the dead (Hertz 1960; van Gennep 1960). Hertz saw the body of the individual as both a biological and a social entity and therefore interpreted mortuary rituals as necessary in order to transform the deceased from a member of the visible society of the living to a member of the invisible society of the dead. Death is only a temporary exclusion from society and the transitory period in which rituals of burial and mourning take place creates a space where social ties between the living and between the living and the dead are renegotiated (Hertz 1960; Metcalf and Huntingdon 1991: 79–107; Davies 2000; 2002: 10–14). Mortuary rituals change the status of the dead and reframe their relationships with the living, but the dead remain relevant members of society as a whole. This strand in Hertz's thought resonates particularly well with recent anthropological and sociological studies on death and commemoration, where the agency of the dead in the social world of the living is emphasized (Hallam and Hockey 2001; Hockey and Draper 2005; Mitchell 2007; Bille, Hastrup, and Sørensen 2010). The dead have a continued material presence in the world of the living through their place of burial, but also through objects and places that are invested with memories of the dead by strategic actions performed by the living (Hockey and Draper 2005; Grimes 2014: 121–30; Laqueur 2015: 31, 55–60). The social life of the dead is as paradoxical as death itself; they are absent and invisible and at the same time present and tangible through demarcated burial and memorial space.

In the following, an approach that focuses on rituals as a category of actions will be applied to mortuary rituals. This approach, which is inspired by the cognitive science of religion, stresses that ritual actions mirror social actions in that they are performed in order to motivate another agent's actions or cause a change in disposition. What makes ritual actions different from mundane social actions is that they are perceived to be influenced by or directed at a so-called counterintuitive being such as a deity, a demon, or a deceased family member. Whereas ordinary actions bring about changes in the mundane world, ritual actions bring about changes in the 'ritual' world.[3] These changes are sometimes invisible, just as their subjects and objects, such as deities and the dead, can be invisible too, but their impact can still be significant and meaningful to those who participate in and observe these actions (Barrett and Lawson 2001; McCauley and Lawson 2007; cf. Uro 2016: 33–5, 65–6).

[3] Ritual actions are designed to be and indeed expected to be efficacious, but at the same time their effects are often invisible. It is felt or known rather than seen that a person has been purified or that a deity has been appeased by a sacrifice. McCauley and Lawson, whose theory specifically focuses on *religious* rituals, write that 'religious rituals bring about changes in the religious world' (2002: 14), whereas Barrett and Lawson describe the consequences of ritual as 'non-natural consequences' (2001, 184–5). In this chapter, I have chosen the more cautious and inclusive description that rituals bring about changes in the ritual world. I do this inspired by the work of Jørgen Podemann Sørensen who stresses that ritual actions have no extra-ritual receivers (1993: 19).

The Sources

Literary Sources

In the New Testament itself, there are only a few brief descriptions of mortuary ritual. Apart from the descriptions of Jesus' burial in the gospels (Matt. 27:57–61; Mark 15:42–7; Luke 23:50–6; John 19:38–42), there are references to mortuary ritual in the stories about the resurrection of the widow's son (Luke 7:12–15), of Jairus' daughter (Matt. 9:23–5; Mark 5:38–43; Luke 8:49–55), of Lazarus (John 11:43–4), and in the stories of the death of Dorcas (Acts 9:37–40), and of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:6–10, for further references, see Rush 1941; MacMullen 2009; Rebillard 2009). The first-century historian Josephus (37–*c*.100 CE) has a brief reference to mortuary ritual in *Against Apion* 2.205 and more elaborate accounts of mourning behaviour in the descriptions of David in *Antiquities* 7 and of elite burials in the descriptions of Herodian funerals in *Antiquities* 14–17 and in *Jewish Wars* 1 (Levison 2002).

In rabbinic literature, the first thematic treatment of mortuary practices is Semahot or Evel Rabbati, which dates to the eighth century or later (Kraemer 2000: 9). In earlier texts, bits and pieces about mortuary ritual can be found in the Mishnah (*c*.200 CE), mostly in the tractates Sanhedrin, Šabbat, Moʿed Qaṭan, ʾOhalot, and Berakot, and with some information added in the third-century Tosefta and Tannaitic Midrashim (for exact references, see Kraemer 2000: 23–47).

This scarcity of texts ceases when we turn to Roman literature (for the following, see Hope 2007; 2009a; 2009b). Cicero (106–143 BCE), writing in the first century BCE, has much to say about funerary customs and what the proper Roman response to death should be. Likewise in the following century, Seneca the Younger (*c*.4 BCE–65 CE) gives a philosopher's view on how to face death and grief. In the second half of the first century CE, the historians Tacitus (56–118 CE) and Pliny the Younger (61–112 CE) offer insights into the mortuary rituals and ideals of the Roman elite, the former through highly evocative literary death scenes and the latter in accounts of death and mourning in a multitude of letters. Mortuary rituals are also treated by comedians and satirists such as Petronius (*c*.27–66 CE), writing in the first half of the first century CE, and the Syrian Lucian of Samosata (*c*.120–after 180 CE) in the second century. In *Satyricon*, Petronius writes about the incredibly wealthy and vulgar freedman Trimalchio, whose lavish banquet ends up as a mock funeral for the host. And in several works, such as the comic dialogue *Charon,* Lucian directed a scathing critique against the mortuary ritual practices and afterlife mythologies of his time.

Although invaluable for information on mortuary ritual practices that leave little or no trace in the material record such as mourning, praying, and processions, literary sources must be treated with caution. It almost goes without saying that the perspectives and experiences that these texts offer are those of the literary elite and religious experts, and as such they may have had no resonance with the vast majority of the population

(Kraemer 2000: 5; Hope 2009a: 10–12).[4] In a time with only very limited literacy and no widely disseminated religious belief system of any kind, it is doubtful that the religious ideals and attempts of systemization of the literary elite would have had any impact on the lives and actions of the proverbial men and women in the street (cf. MacMullen 2009: ix, 8). In the ancient world, literary death scenes became a trope for evaluating the quality of a person's life and character (Davies 1999: 127–38; Noy 2000; Hope 2009a: 50–7), and idealized literary accounts of responses to death could be used to stress the moral qualities or aspirations of a given society, such as when both Cicero and Josephus praise a funeral that is carried out without excessive expenses and with piety (Levison 2002). It is important to keep these social and ideological biases in mind when extracting information on ritual practices from literary sources.

Archaeology

In the archaeological record, we encounter many but by no means all of those ordinary people who are not represented in the literary sources. Throughout the ancient world, the lower classes were buried in simply dug and unmarked graves that leave hardly any trace, or their bodies were disposed of in mass burials in Potter's fields (Bodel 2000; Magness 2012b). However, although the monumental funerary architecture of the elite dominates both the landscape and to some extent scholarly literature, the thousands of burials and epitaphs of the people who were neither at the very top nor bottom of society in the Roman world do give us an insight into the death and life of a broader section of the populace than the one we find in the literature of the time.

Apart from a general ban on burials inside the town or city (Hope 2009a: 154; MacMullen 2009: 9), there was no common rule or law for Jewish, Christian, or Roman funerals during the first centuries CE, and this latitude is to some extent reflected in the diversity of burial practices that were in use (Williams 1994; Rebillard 2009: 139; Graham and Hope 2016). This diversity makes it impossible to give anything but a very general description of Roman burial practices and funerary architecture at the time of the early Christians. During the first two to three centuries CE it is impossible to distinguish between Jewish and Christian burials (McCane 2003: 112), and, generally speaking, Jewish burial practices at this time are firmly embedded in the overall Graeco-Roman practices and material expressions of the Roman world (Fine 2010). There are thus several similarities and a few notable differences in the ways early Jews/Christians and Romans disposed of their dead. In order to illustrate them I shall first introduce the archaeology

[4] I follow Stanley K. Stowers and Daniel Ullucci in naming these specialists 'literate cultural producers' with a term borrowed from Pierre Bourdieu (1991, cf. Stowers 2011 and Ullucci 2011). Literate cultural producers continuously fight for prestige and influence. They do this by interpreting and producing texts, and in the cultural field of the literate cultural producers, it is all about correct beliefs and practices and about the true nature and meaning of things (Stowers 2011). For a recent discussion on religious experts, see Ullucci (2014).

of Roman funerals (based primarily on Toynbee 1971; von Hesberg 1992; Bodel 2008; Hope 2009a; Graham and Hope 2016). The outline below focuses on the city of Rome and Italy (for information on local variations and customs in the provinces, see Hope 2001; Cormack 2004; Stone and Stirling 2007; Hope 2009a: 163–6; and the many useful references in MacMullen 2009). Then I shall turn to the funerary archaeology of Roman Palestine (based primarily on Hachlili 2005; Fine 2010; Magness 2012a; for Jewish burials outside Palestine, see Williams 1994; Rutgers 1995; Hachlili 1998; Stern 2008).

During the first three centuries CE, Roman funerary practices underwent two significant developments. One was the turn to inhumation instead of cremation as the preferred method of disposal of the body, and the other was a move—probably because of a surge in the price of burial plots—from the above-ground necropoleis that lined the roads leading into the cities to underground burial areas, such as subterranean columbaria, which started to appear in the late first century BCE, and catacombs, the oldest of which, the Catacomb of Callistus, dates to the late second century CE. Both of these changes have been connected with the spread of Christianity in the second and third centuries CE and for both phenomena this explanation has been refuted in recent scholarship. Renewed studies of the catacombs of Rome show that there was nothing particularly Christian about this type of burial, and that although a certain amount of clustering in family and religious groups can be discerned, mixed burials remained the norm at least until the fourth century CE (Johnson 1997). As to the end of cremation, which started in the late first century CE, although Jews and Christians consistently practised inhumation even when cremation was in vogue in the Roman world, these groups were too small and too insignificant to have caused such a major change in practices at this time. It is more likely that the change from cremation, which is a rather direct and hands-on method of disposal, to the more distance and concealed practice of inhumation has to do with a more general change in the perception of the body and therefore also of the corpse in Roman society. This change, which is sometimes referred to as the 'discovery' of the importance of the body in late antiquity may have led to a change in the method of disposal of corpses, but the shift from cremation to inhumation may also simply have been a result of changing fashion (Morris 1992: 53–9; Rebillard 2009: 88; Graham 2015).

Whether burnt or buried, the Roman dead could be treated in a number of ways. The cremated remains, which consisted of ashes and mostly intact bones, could be placed in an urn made of either glass or ceramic, or placed in a bag or a box. These containers would then be buried in a pit or put in a built structure above or below ground. Intact bodies could be wrapped in a shroud, placed on a bier, or placed in a coffin or sarcophagus and then either buried in a pit or placed in a built tomb monument, which could also be either above or below ground.

Originally tomb monuments were rare except for those in the top layer of society, but from the second half of the first century BCE tombs start to appear and they increased in popularity during the first century CE. Tomb monuments could have a great variety of architectural forms such as altars, towers, temples, houses, and enclosures. Around the mid-first century CE, tombs generally became larger and intended for multiple burials

and in the late second century the production of stone funerary monuments seems to decrease roughly simultaneously with the appearance of catacombs and an increase in subterranean burials. The earliest catacombs were fairly modest, narrow, and dark structures, but from the fourth century they became more spacious and luxurious. During the fourth and fifth centuries, burials moved above ground once more.

If we turn to burial practices in Roman Palestine, there are two basic modes of disposing of the body: it is either placed in a pit or trench grave dug into the ground, a means of burial which would have been common among the lowest layers of society (e.g. the burial ground at Qumran, cf. Magness 2012a: 244–5, contra Hachlili 2005: 478–9, but see Magness 2012b); or the body was placed in a rock-cut tomb in either a loculus chamber (*kokh* in Hebrew) or in an *arcosolium* niche.[5] There are also a limited number of monumental tomb structures belonging to the elite. The funerary evidence from Roman Palestine comes primarily from the necropolis outside Jericho and Jerusalem (first century BCE–first century CE) and from the necropolis and catacombs at Beth Shearim in the Lower Galilee (third–fifth/sixth centuries CE).[6] The loculus tomb type is by far the most common in Jericho and Jerusalem, but during the first century CE *arcosolia* begin to appear in Jerusalem. At Beth Shearim, *arcosolia* with carved troughs are the most common architectural form for primary burials. Inside the rock-cut tombs, there are examples of both primary and secondary burials. For primary burials the body was placed directly in the loculus or in a receptacle, such as a wooden coffin or a sarcophagus. For secondary burials the body was first placed in the tomb, presumably in a loculus or on a bench, and subsequently the bones were removed to either a communal charnel, a side loculus, or a chamber.

During the last quarter of the first century BCE there is a change in the form of secondary burial, when ossilegium, the practice of collecting and placing bones in individual containers (ossuaries) made of stone, ceramic, or wood rather than placing the bones in a communal deposit, is introduced. The introduction of ossuaries may very well have been due to Roman cultural influence since it is roughly contemporary with the surge in cremation in the Roman world, which started in the mid-third century BCE and continued into the second century CE. Ossuaries could be decorated and inscribed, to some extent, they even resembled Roman funerary urns, and ossuary burial may have allowed the reasonably well-off to have a monumentalized form of burial while sticking to the preferred practice of inhumation rather than cremation.[7] For example, in the

[5] For a discussion of and comparison between the archaeological evidence of burials in first-century Jerusalem and the gospels' accounts of the burial of Jesus, see McCane (2003: 89–108) and Magness (2012a: 245–8).

[6] For continuity with earlier practices, see Hachlili (2005: 512–14) and Magness (2012a: 231–2). The excavators of the Beth Shearim necropolis dated the end of the site to the mid-fourth century CE, but it may have continued in use through the fifth and sixth centuries, see Weiss (2010).

[7] Levi Y. Rahmani proposed that the introduction of ossuaries was due to belief in individual resurrection, but this interpretation has been largely refuted, see Hachlili (2005: 526–8); Fine (2000; 2010: 447–51); and Magness (2012a: 241–2). For information on ossilegium in Galilee, see Aviam and Syon (2002).

necropolis and catacombs of Beth Shearim, there is a diversity of different burial customs. In the above-ground necropolis there are trench graves, cist graves, shaft graves, and mausoleums, and in the catacombs there are the very common *arcosolium* niches and less common loculus chambers. There are primary burials in receptacles such as coffins and sarcophagi made of stone, lead, terracotta, or wood and sometimes there are signs of secondary burials with bones deposited in pits or ossuaries.

In summary, the most distinctive features of Jewish/Christian burial practices in Roman Palestine are the absence of cremation and the temporary introduction of individual secondary burial in ossuaries. Apart from this, there are several similarities between Jewish/Christian and Graeco-Roman burial practices of the first centuries CE. This is particularly evident in the necropolis and catacombs at Beth Shearim which follows the development and trends of Roman funerary architecture with underground burials in large halls and the increasing use of sarcophagi.

Funeral and Mourning

Before the corpse reaches its destination in the tomb, it is prepared through a series of funerary rites that stress the transformation that is taking place when the deceased moves from the community of the living to the community of the dead. These rituals focus on the social *person* of the newly dead and to some extent they mask the fact that this person's physical manifestation is now merely a corpse, a cadaver vulnerable to decay (cf. Graham 2015; Laqueur 2015: 31, 54). The journey from the realm of the living to the realm of the dead is accentuated by the funeral procession that transports the dead from the home to the tomb, and the subsequent period of ritualized mourning behaviour to be observed by the bereaved additionally emphasizes that the time immediately following a death is a time of transition and changing social status.[8]

As often pointed out, there are several similarities between Jewish/Christian and Roman funerary ritual. Therefore, the following is a combined description of funeral and mourning practices among Jews/Christians and Romans that only marks relevant differences, see Rush (1941); Toynbee (1971); Davies (1999); Kraemer (2000); Levison (2002); McCane (2003); Hachlili (2005: 447–516); Hope (2009a); Corley (2010).[9]

According to several Roman authors, at the time of death, the relatives of the deceased would either embrace or kiss the dying person, the latter in order to catch the last breath, and close the eyes (see Hope 2007: 93–4; 2009a: 50, n 14 for references). This task often fell to the closest female relatives. This is in contrast with the Mishnah tractate Shabbat's

[8] For an interesting discussion of the functions and meanings of mourning that engages with the works of van Gennep and Hertz, see Olyan (2004).

[9] As a service to the reader particularly interested in early Christianity, relevant references to New Testament texts have been included below. For references to ancient sources in general, see especially Kraemer (2000: 20–35), Hope (2007: 85–127, 172–210; 2009a: 71–96, 121–49).

recommendation that one should refrain from touching a dying or newly dead person, even in order to close this person's eyes, so as not to interfere with the 'exit of the soul'. After death, the body was placed on the ground, where it was washed (Acts 9:37) and treated with spices and aromatics (Mark 16:1; Matt. 26:12; Luke 24:1; John 12:7; 19:39), and the jaw was bound. In Roman sources, the corpse is also garlanded with flowers and sometimes a coin is placed in its mouth. This latter custom is not mentioned in Jewish/Christian sources, but coins have been found in Jewish burials (Hachlili 2005: 441–3). These preparations took place in the home. The body was then wrapped in a shroud (Matt. 27:59; John 11:44) or in appropriate clothing and kept in the home until the time of the funeral. In Roman sources, the dead were placed on a special couch, a *lectus funebris*, and put on display in the atrium. The length of the display varied according to the social status of the family and the size of the house. For modest households it may have been inconvenient to continue the display for more than a couple of days, but among the wealthy it may have gone on for up to a week. In Jewish/Christian sources it is stressed that the funeral had to take place on the day of death and therefore the body would only have lain on display for a limited time.

The body was carried to the funerary ground in a procession (*pompa* in Latin, Luke 7:12–14) and it was accompanied by friends and family, professional mourners, and musicians (Mark 5:38; Matt. 9:23). Important persons would have been taken first to the Forum so that eulogies could be performed there (Bodel 1999), but most people would have been taken straight to the necropolis for either inhumation or cremation and subsequent interment of the bones. In the case of cremation, which took several hours (Noy 2000), the remains of the pyre were doused with wine before the ashes and bones were gathered in a receptacle. In the case of secondary burial, the final interment of the bones would have to wait until the flesh had decomposed. The most common grave goods were ceramic items, such as cooking pots, lamps, and scented oil vessels (*unguentaria*), and personal items such as jewellery, combs, and even sandals (Hachlili 2005: 375–446; Hope 2009a: 82–5). These items would have been left in the tomb at the time of the funeral or at subsequent visits to the tomb.

After the disposal of the body, the funeral party would gather for a meal. According to Jewish sources, this meal took place in the home sitting on an overturned piece of furniture. The latter may be a symbolic indication of the inversion of normality that takes place during the time of mourning. Roman funerary meals took place at the gravesite and part of the meal may have been a sow that was sacrificed to the goddess Ceres.

The funeral marked the end of the corpse's journey to the tomb, but the time of mourning continued for the bereaved. In Roman sources, mourning lasts for nine days, although longer periods of mourning also occur depending on a person's relationship with the deceased. Mourners wore dark clothes and abstained from bathing and grooming. They may also have abstained from food and they may have voiced their grief with dramatic or mournful utterances. At the end of the nine days, there was a feast with visits to the tomb and purification of the home. In Jewish sources, two periods of mourning are mentioned, lasting seven and thirty days respectively, and mourners refrain from bathing and performing any kind of work. According to both Roman and

Jewish sources, the mourners were ritually impure to a certain extent during the time of mourning and rituals of purification were required before they could return to their everyday lives (Kraemer 2000: 28; Lindsay 2001).[10] Particularly in Roman sources, mourning behaviour is idealized in a way that stresses gender ideals. Men are expected to act stoically and composed when faced with death and loss whereas violent expressions of grief are considered a weak and feminine response. In general, women had a prominent part to play in mortuary ritual both as preparers of the corpse and as mourners. This gave them a certain status and importance of course but the link between women and death may also have carried negative connotations because of ritual pollution. During the first century BCE and the first century CE there was a distinct professionalization and commercialization of funerary practices and services in the Roman world and many of the tasks that involved direct contact with the body, such as washing and anointing, were performed by embalmers and undertakers rather than family members (Bodel 2000; Lindsay 2000; Graham 2015). A similar development may be indicated at Beth Shearim by the many references to funerary professionals in the inscriptions there (Weiss 1992; Williams 1994).

Visiting the Dead

One very prominent aspect of mortuary ritual in the Roman world was habitual visits to the tomb of the deceased at annual festivals of the dead. The most well-documented festivals are the *Parentalia* in mid-February and the festivals of violets and roses in March and May respectively (Toynbee 1971: 61–4; Jensen 2008: 107–20; Hope 2009a: 98–102; MacMullen 2010; 2014; Dolansky 2011; see also Dolansky, Chapter 10 in this volume).[11] During these visits, the family of the deceased would share a tombside meal with the dead and the family dead were perceived as hosts at these occasions (Corley 2010: 29; MacMullen 2014: 492). One very good example of this is a terracotta relief in one of the tombs in the Isola Sacra necropolis south of Rome, where the dead man is depicted with outstretched arms welcoming his guests (Gee 2008: 64). The atmosphere at these meals was festive, even raucous, and Roman funerary architecture attests to the energy invested in picnics at the tomb. Several tombs have furniture for dining and reclining such as table tops and benches and some even have installations for cooking, such as barbecues and wells (Graham 2005; Gee 2008).

[10] It is unknown exactly how and for how long corpse impurity affected those who came into contact with a dead body in Judaism and early Christianity. There is no reason to assume that texts such as Numbers 19 were put into practice, but purity seems to have mattered in relation to funerals and visits to the dead since a number of ritual baths, presumably intended for ritual purification, have been discovered next to tombs and necropoleis (see Adler 2009).

[11] Another well-documented festival of the dead is *Lemuria*, which took place in May, but this was a festival centred on the home of the living, where the dead are perceived as guests, rather than at the tombs of the dead.

There is no explicit evidence of tombside dining in Roman Palestine, but there are structures in the necropoleis in Jericho, Jerusalem, and Beth Shearim that could indicate habitual gatherings and possibly meals at the tomb. In Jericho and Jerusalem, some tombs have open courtyards with benches (Hachlili 2005: 10; Fine 2010: 445), usually referred to as 'mourning enclosures' in the excavation reports, and at Beth Shearim catacombs nos. 14, 20, and 23 have built upper structures also with open courtyards and benches (Avigad 1976). It seems likely that these structures were used for gatherings at and visits to the tomb that extended beyond the actual funeral and possible re-burial of bones (cf. Kraemer 2000: 60–5).[12]

When identifiably Christian funerary remains begin to appear during the third century CE, it is clear that the Christians were visiting their dead and dining at their tombs just like their Graeco-Roman neighbours. On the basis of this, it seems likely that the earliest Christians also performed mortuary rituals that included regular visits to the tomb and meals with the dead (Jensen 2008: 120–4; MacMullen 2009: 25). A late third-century funerary inscription from Satifis in North Africa gives a good impression of a Christian family's interaction with their dead relative, the late Aelia Secundula:

> [W]e have decided furthermore to put up a stone dining chamber where Mother Secundula rests, wherein we may recall the many wonderful things she did, the while the loaves, the cups, the cushions are set out, so as to assuage the sharp hurt that eats at our hearts. While the hour grows late, gladly will we revisit our tales about our virtuous mother, and our praises of her, while the old lady sleeps … (MacMullen 2009: 58)

The family of Aelia Secundula visited her grave and feasted there, presumably to spend time with each other, to strengthen their family bonds, and of course to commemorate the deceased. But the meal was also a ritual that facilitated continued social interaction between the living and the dead. The dead were now invisible counterintuitive beings but nevertheless invested and relevant social agents, treated exactly as such through the means of mortuary rituals such as tombside meals.

Mortuary Rituals and Afterlife Beliefs

Some mortuary ritual practices among the early Christians and their Jewish and Graeco-Roman neighbours fall into a category that is often called ancestor worship or mortuary cult in modern scholarship.[13] This category includes deposition of grave

[12] For a very helpful list of sites with Roman and Christian funerary architecture with indications of tombside dining, see MacMullen (2009: 502–13).

[13] For difficulties with terminology and delineation, contrast the fairly restrictive categories in Schmidt (1996: 4–13) with the very broad definitions in MacMullen (2014) and Steadman, Palmer, and Tilley (1996).

goods and gifts to the dead, customary visits to the tomb possibly to pray to or otherwise interact with the dead, and tombside meals that are shared with the dead. The common denominator for all these practices is a continued social interaction with the dead beyond the boundaries of physical life. For the interpreter, these practices raise questions about the nature and status of the dead: Are they god-like beings from whom one can ask for help and blessing? Or are they feeble and weak spirits, dependent on services and sustenance from the living?

The cultural world of the early Christians was ripe with an abundance of afterlife beliefs that ranged from a categorical refusal of any kind of postmortem existence, to visions of the dead as feeble shades in a dreary netherworld, to various beliefs in resurrection (Davies 1999; Segal 2004; Hope 2009a: 97–120). Interestingly, in spite of this diversity and development in *beliefs* about the afterlife, the *practices* directed towards the dead remained fairly constant throughout the first centuries of the Common Era and furthermore these practices were more or less the same among Romans and Jews/Christians. This seems to indicate that the underlying rationale behind these mortuary rituals is that which has also been stressed above, namely, that the dead are socially relevant and invested agents, and interaction with them is governed by pragmatic, local, and traditional concerns rather than dependent on any system of afterlife beliefs. Although some funerary inscriptions do explicitly mention an afterlife and resurrection, such as the incurably cheerful 'good luck with your resurrection' from Beth Shearim (no. 194, Schwabe and Lifshitz 1974: 180), the ritual practices that take place in the tomb seem to be entirely directed at the ongoing social *personhood* of the deceased (cf. Bynum 1995: 51; Fine 2010). The general sentiment expressed through Jewish/Christian and Roman funerary inscriptions, graffiti, and architecture is one of care and concern for the well-being of the dead. The dead are given gifts of sustenance and protection and several inscriptions and graffiti urge the dead to have courage and threaten anyone who would disturb their tomb (Stern 2013). In several tombs, pillows and headrests indicate either symbolic or real concern for the corporeal comfort of the dead (Hachlili 2005: 72; Graham 2015). These gifts and services were given to and performed for the dead, not necessarily because the dead were thought of as weak or in need (contra Schmidt 1996: 10), but because gifting the dead strengthened the social ties between the dead and the living. According to some people's beliefs, the dead may have been able to reciprocate in some way (cf. evidence of votive practice in funerary contexts in MacMullen 2010: 605; contra Lewis 2013, and cf. Eastman, Chapter 39 in this volume, on the cult of saints), whereas others may have visited and gifted the dead because it was tradition or simply because it felt 'right' (Hope 2009a). Either way, the dead lived on as part of their communities through the mortuary ritual practices performed by the living.

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CHAPTER 21

RITUAL AND TEXTS

ANDERS KLOSTERGAARD PETERSEN

Basic Problems

The aim of this chapter is to examine the complex relationship between ritual and writing in the ancient world. The analysis focuses on: (1) the relationship between the actual ritual and the text that purports to describe or evoke the ritual to the intended addressees of the text; (2) the question of rhetorical persuasiveness achieved by the evocation of ritual in the minds of the intended recipients; (3) and, finally, the question of written texts which themselves may become objects of ritual.

We have numerous ancient texts that refer not only to ritual but like several of the *Magical Papyri* are ritual texts.[1] Yet, it is an open question to what extent such references and texts pave the way for understanding the actual rituals referred to. It is similarly difficult to ascertain the precise meaning and impact of the underlying ritual, when a text has recourse to ritual language seemingly meant to evoke ritual memory or, at the very least, remind its intended audience of ritual experience. Of what value is a metaphorical circumlocution of the ritual? To what degree does it represent the author's theological interpretation of what the ritual should be? To what extent does it reflect direct experience induced in any concrete ritual participant?

By posing these questions, I do not intend to rehearse the old debate of the *Myth and Ritual School* and the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* concerning the priority of ritual over myth. I admire both trajectories of thinking, but their discussions were strongly embedded in debates relating to a normative understanding of what constituted 'real' religion (Petersen forthcoming). My aim is to focus on the intricate problem that pertains to textual references to ritual and their relationship to an underlying experiential level,

[1] With Rappaport, I understand ritual to be: 'the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers' (1999: 240). For the specific notion of magic as equal to ritual efficacy and for its different rationales in terms of cognitive semantics, see Sørensen (2007).

although I also have something to say about the evolutionary connection between ritual and myth (or text as I prefer to call it). Can we really move beyond the textual level and say something more precisely about the actual ritual experience of a past average ritual participant? Is it possible to make the interpretative move from text to underlying ritual, or should we content ourselves with acknowledging the ritual reference and accept that there is no way to penetrate beyond the textual instantiation to the actual ritual?

Let us embark on the discussion by looking at two examples. When Plato in the myth of the soul in the *Phaedrus* emphasizes the special nature of the philosopher's soul, he does so in a language indubitably referring to an Orphically-coloured interpretation of the Eleusinian mysteries. Through the voice of Socrates, Plato argues that the philosopher by employing memory rightly 'is always initiated into perfect mysteries and he alone becomes perfect' (*teleous aei teletas teloumenos, teleos ontōs gignetai*, 249c7f.). Already at this point, we should be cautious about drawing inferences from the allusion to the Eleusinian mysteries. The common reference to them is *ta musteria*, but Plato employs the term *teletai*. It appears to be part of a polemic against an Orphic interpretation of the Eleusinian mysteries.[2] Rather than being a direct reflection of what took place in the initiation, Plato's reference is embedded in a philosophical, theological polemic against one particular strand of past interpretation of the Eleusinian initiation ritual. That said, however, one should also recognize that in order for the reference to work for the intended audience, it is reasonable to assume that not only would they have been capable of acknowledging the reference, but also of understanding the polemical twist added to it—I underscore that I am talking about Plato's intended recipients and not any ancient audience. Similarly, we may surmise that they would have been familiar with an understanding of the Eleusinian ritual of initiation as providing a transition in terms of both being and doing towards a state of perfection. Although Plato criticizes the Orphic interpretation of the Eleusinian mysteries, he also uses it to describe the particular role of the philosopher. He asserts that the philosopher sets himself apart from human interests and turns his attention towards the divine (*pros tō theō*). The masses will understand him as being out of mind (*parakinōn*), since it is concealed from them that he is inspired (*enthousiazōn*, 249d3). By means of the organs of sense, it is hard to arrive at the images of justice and temperance and much less to behold the nature of that which they imitate (250a), since there is no light emanating from their earthly copies. Beauty, however, Plato contends, was visible in shining brightness in former times, when the souls in happy company followed Zeus in train and other souls followed other gods. That was the time during which the souls saw the blessed sight and vision and 'were initiated into what is rightly called the most blessed of mysteries' (*kai etelounto tōn teletōn hēn themis legein makariōtatēn*, 250b). The reference to the Eleusinian mysteries is unquestionable, but once again Plato noticeably avoids the usual term *ta mustēria*. In

[2] In the *Republic* 362e–365c, there is a similar polemic against an Orphic understanding of the Eleusinian mysteries. There Plato also refers to the *teletai* (365a) aimed at delivering humans from evils in the other world. Cf. his use of *teletai* in the *Phaedo* 69c and the *Protagoras* 316d. For Plato's criticism of a possible Orphic 'adoption' of the Eleusinian mysteries, see Graf (1974: 95–121).

the subsequent section he asserts, relating to the celebration of the souls into the most blessed of mysteries:

> which we celebrated in a state of perfection (*ōrgiazomen holoklēroi*), when we were without experience of the evils which awaited us in the time to come, being permitted as initiates (*muoumenoi*) the sight of perfect and simple and calm and happy apparitions (*holoklēra de kai hapla kai atremē kai eudaimonia phasmata*), which we saw in the pure light (*epopteuontes en augē kathara*), being ourselves pure (*katharoi ontes*) and not entombed (*asēmantoi*) in this which we carry about with us and call the body (*sōma*), in which we are imprisoned like an oyster in its shell. (250b–250c [Fowler, LCL])[3]

The terminology undoubtedly reverberates with images that have a connection with the initiation ritual of Eleusis and its purported efficacy. But given not only the likely polemical context of the passage but also the ritually determined encoded mode of speaking about the actual content of the mysteries, it is painstakingly difficult to discern what is metaphor and what is ritual event. When trying to decipher the actual ritual sequences and outcome of the Eleusinian initiation ritual on the basis of this text, we are left with a deplorable enigma. We cannot penetrate the interpretative imperviousness of the passage. There is indubitably a ritual experience evoked by Plato's language and argument that involves an extensive ritual use of light, but on the basis of this passage alone we cannot make headway. Similar to the previous reference, we have to content ourselves with noting that ritual and moral purity as well as some idea of salvation were involved in this ritual and would have been familiar to the intended recipients of the *Phaedrus*. One may, of course, think that this is typical of Plato and that one should focus on 'genuine' texts from the so-called mystery religions. Yet, we are not helped very much in this regard either, since all the texts pertaining to the mystery religions—to a greater or lesser extent—are all of a patently elusive nature.

We are faced with similar if not even greater problems in the famous account of Lucius' initiation into the mysteries of the Isis cult as recounted by Apuleius in the *Metamorphoses* from the second half of the second century CE (see DeMaris, Chapter 22 in this volume). Although the depiction of the protagonist Lucius undergoing the ritual of initiation is often understood as a more or less direct portrayal of an actual ritual initiation into the mysteries of Isis, the description is part of a charade embedded in a humorous novel. One particularly difficult problem facing the interpreter is the fact that whereas the first ten books of the work have a predominantly humorous mock character, this changes with the transition to Book 11 and the depiction of Lucius' ritual metamorphosis, although satire and burlesque do not entirely disappear. Should we then understand Lucius' ritual transformation in line with the previous ten books or rather acknowledge that the author is indicating that something new and far more serious

[3] The last sentence is clearly another reference to Orphic thinking. For the allusions to Orphic elements, see Albinus (2000: 112–40).

is at stake? The stance on this issue has important implications for the interpretation of the ritual incident in Book 11, since scholars endorsing the lampoon character of the entire work are less likely to think that we can make inferences from the depiction to an underlying ritual.[4]

The crucial scene is found in Chapters 22–4. At the signal of the goddess, Lucius comes to understand that finally he has been granted permission to become initiated into the mysteries of Isis (11:22.1–3), which eventually will result in his transformation from the form of a donkey back into that of a human being. Lucius is led to the gate of the great temple by an old priest, Mithras, in order to become introduced to the 'most pious mysteries of the sacred things' (*piisima sacrorum arcana*, 11:22.6). The priest explains to Lucius 'the preparations which had to be made for the initiation' (*ad usum teletae necessario praeparanda*, 11:22.8). Thereupon, he is taken to the bath of purification. Having taken the habitual bath (*sueto lavacro*), the priest prays for the favour (*venia*) of the goddess and cleanses Lucius most purely by sprinkling him with water all around (*purissime circumrorans abluit*). Subsequent to a period of ten days of fasting, Lucius is finally prepared to undergo the initiation into the mysteries which takes place in the evening. At first, he is given sundry gifts by a crowd to mark their social recognition of his forthcoming initiation. The uninitiated are dismissed (11:23.5) and Lucius is dressed in a robe of linen. He is then taken by the hand by the high priest and led into the innermost recess of the sanctuary (*ad ipsius sacrarii penetralia*). At this point Apuleius cautions his recipients about the secret nature of what they are to be presented (11:23.6f.), before he proceeds to tell about the culmination of the ritual event:

> I came to the boundary of death and, having trodden the threshold of Proserpina, I travelled through all the elements and returned. In the middle of the night, I saw the sun flashing with bright light. I came face to face with the gods below and the gods above and paid reverence to them from close at hand. Behold, I have told you things which perforce you may not know, although you have heard them. Therefore, I shall relate only what can be expounded to the minds of the uninitiated without atonement. (11:23.8–24 [Hanson, LCL])

Once again, it is difficult to ascertain what exactly Apuleius' mention of secrecy involves, what the extent of his metaphorization of the ritual comprises, and what the actual ritual event amounts to. Yet, similar to the case of Plato's reference to the Eleusinian mysteries, we can take it for granted that the ritual process as recounted must have been recognizable to the intended audience. In order for the portrayal to work, it is reasonable to assert that the revealed process would have been narratively persuasive to the recipients, precisely because it resembled a genuine ritual of initiation associated with the Isis cult.

[4] Tilg (2014: 97–8) argues in favour of toning down the difference between Book 11 and the previous books while also questioning the assumed difference between seriousness and comedy on the basis of Apuleius' Platonist stance. For the satirical elements and the problems it causes for the interpretation of Lucius' initiation and its relationship to an actual ritual, see Shumate (1996: 7.33).

We can assume, for example, that the use of the vestimentary code played an important role in the ritual (11:24.1f.), just as we know from numerous other initiation rituals in which the change of clothing features prominently in the ritual orchestration. Similarly, the reference to light—'in the middle of the night, I saw the sun flashing with bright light'—seems to be a pervasive element. How we should envisage this to have taken place, though, remains a conundrum. Additionally, it is fair to say that if this portrayal was to function rhetorically, the intended audience must have been able to see themselves in the efficacy ascribed to the ritual. In the cultural world of the *Metamorphoses*, one can, in fact, undergo ritual processes and thereby be understood to have obtained an irreversibly new form of being with a corollary novel capacity for doing.

The examples demonstrate how the relationship between ritual and text is far from simple. Texts may record and thus preserve and transmit a ritual. Conversely, ritual performance may stimulate composition and generate a text. Due to their many variations, early manuscripts pay vivid evidence to the development and performance of texts as we know from the development of the Christian rituals of baptism and communion.

A Semiotic Approach

To understand what is at stake in texts that refer to rituals, it is crucial to appreciate the different semiotic nature of the two. If a text, as we have seen in the preceding examples, has recourse to ritual in order to recall a ritual experience in the intended audience, it must be because the evoked ritual experience can contribute something to the textual world-construction which the text could not otherwise have done.

One may think of the aspect of ritual efficacy. Despite their precise location on a scale of rhetorical exercise, all texts are engaged in the act of persuasion with the genuinely rhetorical texts (deliberative, forensic, and less so the epideictic genre) situated at one end of the spectrum and educational, encyclopaedic texts at the other. But even the latter should preferably move their audience to a higher level of insight and persuade them to accept the view presented. Yet, the most interesting texts in this context are the deliberative ones which are aimed at changing the views and/or behaviour of the addressed audience. Religious texts, for instance, are often engaged in instilling in their recipients the need to act in accordance with the basic values of the religious worldview.[5] At the same time, they specify what the implications of this worldview are in terms of actual behaviour. An important element in this regard is the author's opportunity to refer to the audience's own acknowledgement of their commitment to the worldview. If the author cannot obtain recognition and sense of obligation on the part of the audience, the chances are low that the text will succeed in inculcating anything at all. No text can

[5] With Jensen, I understand religion as 'semantic and cognitive networks comprising ideas, behaviours and institutions in relation to counter-intuitive superhuman agents, objects, and posits' (2014: 8).

convey to its audience that it has been irreversibly transposed from one state of being and of doing to another, unless it can refer to an extratextual point at which such a transition may be said to have occurred. In the narrated world of the *Metamorphoses*, Lucius' change from ass to human takes place by means of a ritual of initiation which in the world of the audience is likely to be assigned the capability of attaining such efficacy. Thereby, the credibility of the narrated story is enhanced. Similarly, when religious texts have recourse to a point in the life experience of the audience in which they can be asserted not only to have committed themselves to a religious worldview but also to have undergone the fundamental transformations dictated by the worldview in question, it becomes easier to enjoin the audience to imitate the ideal agents inhabiting the narrated world of the worldview. Yet, to understand why there is this difference between textual and ritual communication, we shall make a detour to semiotics.

In his magnum opus, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (1999), Roy Rappaport presented a ritual theory which provides us with the means to understand the importance of ritual references in religious texts. Rappaport belongs to a Durkheimian trajectory of thinking about culture which implies that culture should not so much be thought of as a means of suppression (the Marxian view) as a way of assembling people around the core values and symbols of the group. In this sense, Rappaport was a proponent of a 'weak' notion of culture. To Rappaport and the Durkheimian tradition, the great conundrum is not how culture may be used to exert power over other people, but the real enigma pertains to the question of how culture can come into existence in the first instance and, second, how it can persist.

As an advocate of the Durkheimian view, Rappaport held ritual to be the crucial foundation for culture, since it is in ritual and therefore in the cult that culture comes into existence. Similarly, ritual and cult are the fundamental event to gather people anew around the basic values and symbols of the group, that is, the sacred, in order to revitalize and retain these core principles (Durkheim 2007: 116, 543, 588–9). In this understanding, the sacred constitutes a social self-celebration in as much as it is the group revivifying itself by affirming its fundamental values. Periods of profanity are dangerous to the group, since it is during these phases that the cultural norms and symbols fade away and are in need of renewed reaffirmation if the culture is not to be annihilated.

Rappaport adds to the Durkheimian understanding by undergirding it with Peircian semiotics. Peirce has ten different sign trichotomies, of which three relate to the differentiation between the sign, the object (of the sign), and the interpretant (the transfer of the sign into a new sign) (Peirce 1931–1936: vol. ii, §254–63; 1958: vol. viii, §314f., 343; cf. Peirce 1998: vol. 2, 481–91, especially 483–91). This may seem rather convoluted, and certainly it is, but one of the trichotomies has proven particularly influential in ritual studies. Every sign consists of the sign and the object to which it refers, such as the acoustic sound 'dog' and the phenomenon of creatures to which the sound refers. In Saussurian semiotics or linguistics, this is commonly designated as the relationship between the signifier and the signified which both refer to two different aspects of the sign 'dog'. To this, however, Peirce ingenuously added the aspect to the interpretant, acknowledging that every use of signs gives rise to new slightly modified sign manifestations.

Thus, the interpretant does not denote the interpreter of the sign but the new conceptual phenomenon that any reception of the sign prompts. The crucial point in this context relates to the question of what it is in the relationship between the sign and the object that makes the sign a sign of a particular type. This is the framework for Peirce's distinction between the symbol, the icon, and the index. Although all three of them are relevant in this context, I shall confine myself to focus on the symbol and the index as they are the most important ones in this regard. Whereas the former is characterized by an arbitrary relationship determined by social convention between the sign and its object, the index is typified by a material, direct relation by which the sign is physically related to its object. There is nothing intrinsic about the word 'kiss' that binds it to its object. It may also be expressed by comparable lexemes such as *bacio* and *Kuss*. The weathervane, conversely, turning in the wind is an index of the wind, since it directly and materially refers to the wind. Although Peirce is not entirely clear in his understanding of the index, I shall focus on Rappaport's use of the distinction between symbol and index.

Rappaport emphasizes how indexicality and the use of indexical signs play a pivotal role in ritualization and human culture, since the bodies of the ritual performers are conceived of as having an indexical nature. The person engaged in genuflection, that is, bending down in a kneeling position, is not only expressing subjugation but also embodying this subjection in action. By virtue of the kneeling position the performer comes to bodily manifest the semantic system in which the action is part. Rappaport now relates the distinction between different types of sign relations to ritual and ritualization. His basic argument is that rituals are a special type of action by virtue of the collocation of symbolic and indexical elements, which serve to solve a foundational problem relating to symbolic communication. Language enables humans to move beyond the 'here and now' by making them capable of referring to things not present and to actions involving different forms of future interaction, such as when we make promises. By engaging in this form of communication, humans also become susceptible to being taken advantage of by regular cheaters or free-riders who do not adhere to their own obligations. Symbolic communication, therefore, is always confronted with the question of trust. How can I invest faithfulness in the other or the group if I risk becoming a victim of lying and deception? Symbolic communication has a fragile nature based on the fact that only social convention connects the sign with the object. If the sign can occur without the presence of the object, and the object can be present in the absence of the sign, one risks being vulnerable to lies and confusion (or Babel, as Rappaport prefers to designate it).

Symbolic communication can only function on the basis that the participants share a basic knowledge such as language competence but also abide by the rules dictated by the norms reflecting used language. If I keep telling people that I promise to do something but I do not follow up with action, my promise becomes not only meaningless but also a norm transgression. As a culturally determined generation of meaning, symbolic communication is dependent upon a certain stability relating to the settled meanings. As symbolic communication has enhanced the adaptive abilities of humans considerably, it has also paved the way for two vices: the existence of the lie and the alternative

(Rappaport 1999: 321–2). To partake in large-scale cooperation, it is critical for humans that they can rely on an order which not only determines the rules for exchange within the community but also guarantees its existence. The existence of such an order is decisive for the possibility of investing faithfulness in the group. As a vice intrinsic to symbolic communication, the lie should be obvious, but the existence of Babel or the alternative may appear more opaque. Yet, if humans can invest trust in deities or in a political party, they may also put faith in an alternative group of gods or another party. The ability to envision alternative orders has endowed humans with a unique degree of adaptability and a considerable capacity to transform culture and society. This capability, however, may potentially lead to chaos and lack of societal order, since there is no certain space to stand on.

According to Rappaport, rituals play a pivotal role not only in neutralizing but also in overcoming the two basic threats emanating from symbolic communication. Ritual does not remove the two vices, but it functions in a stabilizing manner whereby it serves to abate the risk of societal entropy generated by Babel and lying. In ritual, the Word—the foundation of symbolic communication—comes into existence as a bulwark against lying and the dissolving power of polyvalence (1999: 26).

Symbolic communication is perpetually met by evaluations by which the receiver assesses the truth and obligatory value of the statement. Since it can be questioned, an intrinsic element pertaining to its reception relates to trustworthiness. In one's interaction with other people, it is crucial that one can rely on the fact that they will act according to the rules of the symbolic communication, and that one can trust what they say (Tomasello 2016). If a particular form of communication is subject to deception and lying, it creates problems, since the receiver cannot be certain about the correspondence of the communication with 'reality'. And if there is no trustworthy foundation for communication, there is no safe ground for action either. Ritual helps overcome this problem. By the ritual juxtaposition of the symbolic and the indexical, the symbolic level is endowed with a firm ground. In ritual, according to Rappaport, the relationship between sign and object is reversed. In ordinary symbolic communication, the sign is of a non-substantial, immaterial, or even 'unreal' character, whereas the object appears to be of a substantial, material, and 'real' nature in as much as it refers to phenomena in the 'real' world. In ritual, this relation is turned around, because the sign is bequeathed with a seemingly real, material character, while the object obtains the opposite properties. In Christian communion, for instance, not only have bread and wine by virtue of their materiality and, thereby, their immediate accessibility to the senses an apparent real nature but this also applies to the ritual performer. By the indexical posture in genuflection at the alter pew, the ritualist indexically acknowledges and embodies an acceptance of the semantic universe in which the communion is embedded. Something the ritual performers may think is without significance in this context, but by their posture they signify acceptance. This collocation of indexical and symbolic elements is closely connected to another important differentiation in Rappaport's thinking. Rituals frequently consist of a combination of self-referential and canonical messages. The self-referential messages refer to the actual physical, mental, and social status of the ritualists. The

participant in Christian communion signals to himself and herself as well as to the public that he or she has subjected himself or herself to the semantic universe of the communion. At the same time, however, a ritual of communion contains other information, the reality of which is independent of the reactions of the ritual performers. This other information is encoded in liturgy and refers to elements beyond the specific ritual performance:

> They always include, in words and acts that have been spoken or performed before, orders, processes or entities, material, social, abstract, ideal or spiritual, the existence or putative existence of which transcends the present. The self-referential represents the immediate, the particular and the vital aspects of *events*; the canonical, in contrast, represents the general, enduring, or even eternal aspects of *universal order*. (Rappaport 1999: 53)

The canonical messages refer to the semantic system instantiated by the ritual. They are independent of the ritualists, since they refer to an already established cultural reality, the existence of which is detached from the performers. Whether the particular performer in a communion believes that he or she has received forgiveness for sins or not, it does not affect the basic ritual contention that God in Christ Jesus has created a new reality, whereby humans have been granted forgiveness for their sins. Canonical messages can only be represented symbolically, since they neither refer to present elements and (frequently) nor to material elements. Rappaport, however, does not contend that canonical messages are symbolic, while the self-referential ones are indexical. His assertion is that there is a close relationship between the self-referential messages and the indexical component, just as there is a thorough connection between symbolic communication and the canonical messages. The ritual juxtaposition of the symbolic with the indexical attributes plausibility to the canonical messages, because they momentarily obtain material and, thereby, a genuinely real character. Rappaport is well aware of the fact that a symbolically determined index (in the previous examples we are, contrary to the weathervane example, not talking about natural indexes) is no guarantee of keeping Babel or lying at a distance. His argument is that without this ritual form of communication it would be extremely difficult, verging on the impossible, to establish any form of trustworthiness relating to the symbolic communication which constitutes the foundation for symbolic culture.[6] It may appear paradoxical that the most complex forms of symbolic communication can only be sustained and can endure on the basis of underlying and much older layers of biocultural evolution to which they have been added (Rappaport 1999: 58).[7]

[6] There are other forms of culture not dependent upon symbolic communication. For these other forms and their biocultural evolutionary basis in supporting and undergirding theoretical culture, see Donald (2001: 279–98), and for his three-stage theory of human evolution, see (1991: 124–360).

[7] This is a basic argument in Bellah's evolutionary view of culture that nothing is ever lost, that is, nothing decisive (2005: 72; 2011). Cf. Joas (2014: 19–20, 59–60). For a far more comprehensive notion of biocultural evolution and its entailments, see Turner et al. (2017).

Based on these considerations, we are ready to return to the question of the relationship between text and ritual, since we are now in a position to appreciate the special properties of text and ritual. The acknowledgement of the different qualities of the two is the key to understanding why texts occasionally have recourse to ritual. At the same time, we have also come to understand why one hardly thinks of ritual, not necessarily as being dependent upon text, but certainly as being in need of a semantic, symbolic frame that ascribes the indexical communication with meaning.

Exemplifying and Applying the Theoretical Considerations

In his letter to the Romans originating around the mid-50s CE, Paul addresses a community which he has not founded. The letter is not only an attempt to present his form of Christ-religion *in extenso* to these recipients but also to win this particular audience for his case. Paul is representative of a charismatic form of religion. He is convinced he has the spirit of God and has been commissioned by God to preach his special message. Contrary to the other apostles whose status is founded on their relationship with Jesus, Paul has his vocation as a direct call from God and Christ (Gal. 1:1f.). Similar to the prophets of the Hebrew Bible, God had chosen Paul from his mother's womb. His gospel is not from humans, but is governed by a direct revelation.[8] Due to this specific background, Romans is slightly different from Paul's other six authentic letters, since it functions as a form of self-representation and an extensive exposition of the basic ideas of his worldview.

I cannot go into detail with the succinct structure of Romans. Suffice it to say that Paul in Chapters 5–8 proceeds to introduce to his recipients the core narrative of his worldview which also serves to substantiate the main point of the letter that the gospel represents 'the power of God for salvation for everyone who invests faithfulness (*pas ho pisteuōn*) in it, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faithfulness to faithfulness, as it is written: "the righteous shall live by faithfulness" ' (Rom. 1:16b–17).[9] In Chapter 5, Paul presents his basic worldview.[10] In 5:1 he makes it clear that Christ-adherents by virtue of the justification related to their

[8] Paul's self-depiction matches Weber's description of the charismatic which has partly to do with the fact that Weber's notion of charismatic religion and the charismatic in the vein of Rudolph Sohm is built on Paul (Weber 1968: 482; 1972: 658).

[9] The traditional translation of *pisteuein* and *pistis* is 'believe' and 'belief'. I agree with the number of scholars who argue for a translation of *pistis* as 'faithfulness' or 'loyalty' and *pisteuein* as 'invest faithfulness in' or 'putting trust in'. See Morgan (2015: 282–302), and Kugler (2016).

[10] Stowers (1994) has argued that such an understanding reflects an old Augustinian, universal, salvation-historical reading of the letter which fails to account for the ancient context as well as the rhetorical situation in which the letter was written. For a refutation of Stowers' view, see Petersen (2015: 166–8).

investment of trust in Christ have obtained peace with God. God let Christ die at a time when Christ-adherents were still subject to sin. By Christ's sacrificial death, they have obtained a status of being righteous before God, so that they may be saved from the wrath of God (Rom. 5:9). By Christ's death, the enmity between God and humans has ended, and the two parties are reconciled (Rom. 5:10). This brief narrative obviously raises the question pertaining to what happened before. How did God and humans enter into hostility to each other? This is the key issue of Rom. 5:12–21 in which the narrated figures of Adam and Christ on the surface of the text function as an emblematic expression of the deep structure of Paul's thinking. By demonstrating faithfulness to God's vocation, Jesus is crucified as a propitiatory sacrifice and thereby takes on the role of reconciling the relationship between God and humans, a relationship that was broken by the sin of Adam and and the sin of every human, that is, Adam, ever since. Although the law and thereby the role of the Jews—referring back to the main thesis of the letter in Rom. 1:16–17—constitute a special situation in human history, the existence of the law does not radically change the story as embodied in the two main protagonists, Adam and Christ as the second Adam. If Christ by his death has achieved peace with God, however, thereby changing the relationship between God and humans, the question inevitably arises how humans are related to Christ, and how they share in this epochal event.

At this point, Paul has recourse to a ritual reference, an extensive depiction of the fundamental changes in terms of being and doing that have occurred to Christ-adherents in baptism. The primary reason for Paul to appeal to the baptismal experience of the addressees is to obtain an empirical correlate to what in retrospect may be seen as lacking in the argument of Rom. 5:12–21. In this way, one may see the first part of Chapter 6 as a completion of the preceding Adam-Christ typology of Chapter 5. We do not know much about the early ritual of initiation of Christ-religion, nor do we know whether the intended audience would have interpreted Paul's references to their baptism in a way similar to Paul. Yet, that is not important. The crucial point is that Paul by the evocation of their baptismal experience is referring to another type of communication which by virtue of its use of other types of signs might be thought to have had a greater degree of persuasiveness than an exclusive symbolic form of communication (cf. also Paul's continuous references to the recipients' possession of the Spirit in his various letters. Gal. 3:2 is an indicative example of this.) This is exactly the point highlighted by Roy Rappaport in his ritual theory, as we saw in the preceding section. Rappaport's core idea is that symbolic meaning (the religious worldview) can only be made accessible and become efficient or real to the religious adherents on the basis that there is a time and a space in and at which it is materially manifested or made concrete. This is, in Rappaport's view, exactly what takes place in ritual, hence his emphasis on ritual as the decisive act for creating and preserving culture. Rappaport did not apply this insight to the question of texts in which ritual references appear. That is my contribution or addendum to the Rappaportian theory; but I think it accords well with the overall thrust of Rappaport's concept of culture, religion, and the role of ritual.

By resuming the question of Rom. 3:8, 'Why not do evil that good may come?', Paul is now in a situation to repudiate the argument. Through their ritual death in baptism, Christ-adherents have undergone a decisive change of being and doing, which, according to Paul, not only puts them but forces them into a situation in which they cannot but act in the same way as Christ acted at his death of crucifixion: 'Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?' (Rom. 6:3). Contrary to Christ, however, who has been raised from the dead, Christ-adherents still have this event before them: 'We were buried therefore with him by baptism into his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father, we too might walk in newness of life' (Rom. 6:4).

Similar to other rituals of initiation in which there is a strong emphasis on the element of irreversible separation from one's previous being, Paul underscores how Christ-adherents by their ritual participation have once and for all left their previous sinful life behind and have been transferred into a new reality. They have become servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:17). In the subsequent Chapter 7, Paul resumes the question of the special role of the law by autobiographically—an I-account—retrojecting himself to the situation prior to the Christ-event of death, resurrection, and exaltation. Only by virtue of the Christ-event have humans become enabled to fulfil the true meaning of the Mosaic law, as Paul goes on to argue in Chapter 8. The chapter anticipates the paraenesis of Chapters 12–15. We do not need to enter into more detail about this. The point should be clear. By means of the digitalization intrinsic to rituals of initiation which introduces and elicits a categorical difference between before and after, Paul is linguistically enabled to emphasize the incongruity between then and now (accentuated by the use of the temporal particle *nun*, that is, now). The ritual reference and the purported efficacy inherent in the ritual serve to hammer home Paul's argument to his recipients. Since by their ritual participation they have been incorporated into this new reality described by Paul, they have to take the argument for granted. Needless to say, we are only able to see this on the basis of the insights from Rappaport presented in the previous section. Rappaport's emphasis on the conjunction between symbolic and indexical components in ritual in particular and in the general relationship between indexical and symbolic communication have thereby enabled us to understand a crucial element in religious (and more generally cultural) texts which often resonate with ritual allusions or even specific references.

Obviously, there is a strong element of occultation (that is, either a deliberate or non-conscious attempt to obscure the matter) involved, since it does not follow from the addressees' baptism that they should adhere to Paul's particular version of Christ-religion. That, however, is elegantly suppressed by the universalism included in the ritual. The ritual reference subdues the existence of alternative interpretations by seemingly underscoring what is common and, therefore, obligatory to everyone. The reference can only do that by evoking those extratextual elements which adhere to the ritual by virtue of its indexical properties. What I have argued here in some detail may also be seen in Paul's other uses of baptismal references as in 1 Cor. 6:11 or Gal. 3:26–9. The reference to ritual provides a bridge between the textual universe and the world of the audience

by recalling for them the point at which they not only committed themselves to this textual universe but also became bodily incorporated into it. Once again, I underline that there is a strong element of occultation at play, since the fact that one has been ritually integrated into a particular semantic universe does not necessarily entail that one should abide to the same interpretations of that universe as that of the author. But that only proves the strength of ritual and the power of including ritual references in textual production.

The point of this argument does not pertain to the study of Paul and formative Christ-religion alone, just as it is not exclusive to rituals of initiation, although the latter by virtue of their radical character in terms of attributed efficacy constitute the most powerful reference relating to rhetoric. In principle, I assert, the argument pertains to all religious texts that have recourse to ritual references or metaphorically evoke the effect of a particular ritual. This may be seen, for instance, in the Community Scroll of Qumran:

> God will refine (*ybrr*), with his truth, all man's deeds, and will purify (*jzqq*) for himself the structure of man, ripping out all spirit of injustice, from the innermost part of his flesh, and cleansing (*wlṭhrw*) him with the spirit of holiness (*brwḥ qwdš*) from every wicked deed. He will sprinkle (*wjz*) over him the spirit of truth (*rwḥ ʾmt*) like lustral water (*cmy ndh*) (in order to cleanse him) from all the abhorrences of deceit and (from) the defilement of the unclean spirit (*whtgwll brwḥ ndh*), in order to instruct the upright ones with knowledge of the Most High, and to make understand the wisdom of the sons of heaven to those of perfect behaviour. For those God has chosen for an everlasting covenant and to them shall belong all the glory of Adam (*cwl kbwdʾdm*). (1QS IV 20–3, cf. III 4f.; Martínez and Tigchelaar 1997)

This passage places strong emphasis on moral purity which is not generally characteristic of the Qumran texts which have a strong concern for ontological purity, often tied very closely to ritual. Here, however, we do not need to enter into this discussion. Suffice it to say that it is unclear whether the text by its notions of 'sprinkling' and 'lustral water' refers to an actual ritual or not. But even in the case of a metaphor, we may ascertain that the addressees would have been familiar with actual purification rituals by means of sprinkling with water. Only on the basis of such knowledge does the metaphor work. To argue that the recipients have been sprinkled with the spirit of truth and that by lustral water they have been cleansed from the abhorrence of deceit and the defilement of the unclean spirit, it is crucial for the author to be able to evoke a point in recipients' lives in which they may recall this to have become true for them or, at the very least, to have undergone a ritual assigned this quality. This is exactly the point of Rappaport's theoretical endeavour. When Rappaport lays stress on the collocation of indexical and symbolic components in ritual in order to make the symbolic world come true, this insight may, by virtue of the same logic, be extended to apply also to the relationship between ritual and text. To the textual addressees, the ritual allusion evokes their previous experience

(or in some cases an experience which they may only have heard about), and this evoked juxtaposition of indexicality and symbolicity considerably enhances the plausibility of the textual symbolic world.

Text as a Ritual Instrument

Before coming to an end, I shall briefly mention a more extreme case of the interaction between ritual and text, namely, those cases in which a text not only alludes or refers to a ritual but has itself undergone a development towards becoming a ritual object. Rhapsodomantics constituted a form of divinatory practice by which one drew lots from writings imputed an inspired or sacred character such as the Homeric Songs, the *Aeneid*, and the Bible. It is obviously a fairly late phenomenon, since it presupposes the existence of writing as a developed medium. One example is the papyrus known as *PGM* VII dating to the third or the fourth century CE. It includes a *Homeromanteion* consisting of 216 arbitrarily chosen Homeric verses situated in random order.[11] Either oracle priests or the oracular petitioner threw three dices whose eyes were meant to correspond with a succinct numbering system of the Homeric verses on the papyrus that were in turn related to particular hours of the day. Each of the Homeric verses was preceded by a set of three numbers with each column numbered from one to six (running from 1–1–1 to 6–6–6), thus getting a total number of 216 verses. In this manner, an oracular petitioner might obtain a firm answer on how to proceed with his love life. Needless to say, the oracular answer does frequently demand some amount of subsequent exegesis. It is, for instance, not entirely clear if one had rolled the three dices with the following numbers 4–6–4, how one should relate a verse like 'You lunatic, sit still and listen to the words of others' (Il 2:200) to the progression of one's erotic undertakings. Or what should an oracular petitioner do if he had received the following numbers 5–3–6 in pursuit of a clear answer to what future course he should take: 'Keep quiet, friend, and do as I say' (Il 4:412)?[12] Although this divinatory practice, strictly speaking, represents an amalgam between astragalomantics and rhapsodomantics, i.e. divination by means of rolling dice and by means of randomly drawing textual lots, it points to the importance of the latter. What is interesting about it is the fact that the writing itself by virtue of its attributed sacrality or inspiration could serve as the basis of a ritual. The randomization involved in the ritual is a cognitive prerequisite for the ascription of efficacy to the ritual. The performer roles the dice or has the

[11] The Greek text is found in Preisendanz (1931: 1–6), and an English translation is given by Hubert Martin, Jr., in Betz (1992: 112–19).

[12] Examples of questions posed at oracles are found in Potter with regard to the *Sortes Astrampsychi* (1994: 25–6). In Horsley, an extant example of the questions posed to the *Sortes Astrampsychi* is given: '72 Shall I get the allowance? 73 Am I to remain where I am going? 74 Am I to be sold? 75 Am I to obtain profit from my friend?', etc. (1982: 42).

oracular priest role the dice on his behalf, but the two are not in control of the result. That together with the attribution of the text to a superhuman realm makes it possible to assign the result to the divine. A famous example of rhapsodomantics is found in the eighth book of Augustine's *Confessiones*. Although this case also constitutes a blend between two mantic practices—cledonomantics, that is, oracles by means of sudden and random sounds, and rhapsodomantics—it testifies to the importance of the latter. Having heard children utter the words *tolle lege, tolle lege* ('take and read, take and read'—which happen also to be technical mantic terms) as part of a children's game, Augustine interprets this as a cledonomantic oracle, that is, divination based on random encounters, events, or sounds, and hurries back to his friend, Alypius:

> So, I hurried back to the place where Alypius was sitting. There I had put down the book of the apostle when I got up. I seized it, opened it and in silence read the first passage on which my eyes lit: 'Not in riots and drunken parties, not in eroticism and indecencies, not in strife and rivalry, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts' [Rom 13, 13f.]. I neither wished nor needed to read further. At once, with the last words of this sentence, it was as if a light of relief from all anxiety flooded into my heart. All the shadows of doubt were dispelled. Then I inserted my finger or some other mark in the book and closed it. With a face now at peace I told everything to Alypius. (*Confessiones* VIII 12, 29; Chadwick 1991)

The relationship between ritual and text in this case is also of an excessive nature compared to the introductory examples of this chapter. The two are conflated, since the text in the context of book religions can be assigned the role of ritual medium and, thus, function as the basis for new rituals. To read the text may, in fact, become a ritual on its own, just as the text may be preciously equipped with gems and expensive metals as we know from the famous Bible codices and Qurans of the medieval period. In the end, we may ask the question, how does this case of extreme textual ritualization relate to the previous theoretical ruminations discussed above?

Once again, I think the Rappaportian approach is very helpful in casting light on this phenomenon. By turning texts into ritual objects and instruments, the text attains an indexical character which it did not previously have. The text may even be seen as a material reflection of the celestial world, a perspective reflected in the impressive medieval codices, embroidered with considerable amonts of gold, gems, and silver. By virtue of the materiality of the text, the notion of the text as rendering the truth about the heavenly world and reflecting insights originating in the divine world, it is easy to see how one may.

Conclusion

We have come to the end of this examination of ritual and text. We have observed how there is a complex relationship between writing and ritual in the ancient world.

Application of Rappaport's ritual theory, I have argued, is crucial for an understanding of this relationship because it alerts us to the special properties that belong to different kinds of communication, *in casu* ritual and text. The overall thesis is that when religious texts evoke ritual experiences or metaphorically reference elements known by the audience to have a ritual background, they do it in order to substantiate how the addressees are committed to the semantic universe instantiated by the texts in question. By virtue of the indexicality at play in ritual, such references—textually recalling the ritual experience before the audience—enhance the persuasiveness of the textual argument considerably.

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PART III

RITUAL IN NASCENT CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER 22

WATER RITUAL

RICHARD E. DEMARIS

Introduction

The ritual of baptism has suffered the same fate as every significant and long-lived ritual: attention gravitates towards its conceptual and intangible significance and away from its tangible and palpable features. Consequently, baptism is typically fitted into a theological framework; it is understood in terms of eschatology, Christology, or soteriology rather than as ritual per se and as one ritual among others. Historical studies of baptism that focus on its origins may connect it to other rituals, but they typically do so in order to assert its distinctiveness or uniqueness. Its central importance to Christian tradition and practice has only compounded its isolation. Its very prominence has removed it from consideration alongside similar rituals in the early church and the ritual use of water generally in the ancient Mediterranean world.

To counteract the tendency to go behind a ritual to get at its 'real' or 'deeper' meaning, ritual theorists adopt two strategies. Theorists like Roy Rappaport advocate paying attention to the obvious aspects of ritual, that is, to its physical or concrete features (Rappaport 1979). Similarly, Evan Zuesse emphasizes its bodily aspect: 'Ritual centers on the body, and to understand ritual one shall have to take the body seriously as a vehicle for religious experience' (Zuesse 2005: 7834).

A second and related strategy for maintaining focus on ritual is to pay attention to where, socially speaking, it occurs. In his analysis of drama as ritual, Ronald Grimes articulated an approach that 'describe[s] the whole event, which extends … to the cultural occasion and social circumstance in which [the plays] are embedded' (1990: 90). Catherine Bell devoted an entire section of *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* to the issue of ritual context. Part III, entitled 'Context: The Fabric of Ritual Life', begins, 'A ritual is never alone. It is usually one ceremony among many in the larger ritual life of a person or community, one gesture among a multitude of gestures …' (Bell 1997: 171). Or as Stanley Tambiah succinctly puts it, 'A rite is never conducted in a vacuum, but in the context of other activities' (1985: 48). These two strategies constitute an approach that

will guide this chapter. Because rites do not have fixed outcomes, their corporeal aspect and social context figure heavily in determining their significance.

A Water Rite in the Context of Greek and Roman Bathing Cultures

Perhaps the most obvious feature of baptism was that it employed water. Placing such water use in full ritual context would be a herculean task, given how widely and variously water was used for ritual purposes in the ancient Mediterranean. But two key developments in water use merit attention, either because of their cultural importance and prominence or because of when and where they developed. The first was the presence of a bathing culture in the lands and cities that hosted the Jesus movement and the earliest Christ-followers, a culture that became enormously prominent when the Romans rose to power. Greek colonization of the eastern Mediterranean world brought with it not only the agora and theatre but also the bath and the gymnasium. (The latter typically included bathing facilities.) Greek baths dotted the Mediterranean world from Massalia and Magna Graecia to Asia Minor and Cyprus. Hellenization of the lands conquered by Alexander extended bathing culture farther east. While not as numerous as the baths in Ptolemaic Egypt, the Seleucids built them throughout their domains, from Asia Minor to Palestine (Nielsen 1990: 6–7; see index in Ginouvès 1962: 431–40). In Palestine, the bathhouses at Beth-Zur and Gezer/Gazara are particularly noteworthy (Macalister 1911–1912: 1.223–8; Sellers 1933: 16–18; Sellers et al. 1968: 1–2; Hoss 2005: 39). Bathing practices were almost certainly part of the Greek of way life introduced in Judea under Seleucid sway, which included construction of gymnasia (1 Macc. 1:10–15; 2 Macc. 4:7–17).

The second key development in water use was the advent of *mikva'ot* or stepped water installations—pools or large basins—that permitted full immersion bathing. Their appearance coincided with rising resistance to Seleucid rule in Judea, which came to a military and political head in the Maccabean revolt. *Mikva'ot* began to appear in the second century BCE at sites under Maccabean-Hasmonean control. (Though they resisted Seleucid imperialism, Hasmonean royalty built Greek-style baths in their palaces [Netzer 2001]). They proliferated in Judea, especially in and around Jerusalem, before 70 CE and appeared in Galilee in lesser numbers afterward. Their physical contexts varied widely: public spaces, private residences, and near synagogues, cemeteries, and agricultural processing sites like wine and oil presses (Hoss 2005: 4; 104–10; Lawrence 2006: 190–1). They also appeared in or near Greek and Roman bathing facilities. Members of the Jesus movement were undoubtedly familiar with the *mikveh* and the water ritual associated with it.

With the coming of Roman rule came another wave of bathing culture and its attendant facilities. While indebted to Greek practices that utilized hipbaths and tubs,

Romans preferred large communal bathing rooms with water of various temperatures. Bathers circulated among them and plunge pools. Bathing protocol became more elaborate over time and could include anointing with oil, removing it (along with dirt and loose skin) by scraping (strigiling), and applying ointments and perfumes (Fagan 1999: 10; Yegül 2010: 16). The number and scale of Roman baths grew as bathing become more and more popular and customary: 'Bathing in public was a central event in the daily lives of the Romans. It would not be an exaggeration to say that at the height of their empire, public baths embodied the ideal Roman way of urban living' (Yegül 2010: 2). So, the commonest ritual use of water in the Roman Empire was the daily bath, a pattern that all early Christ-followers knew.

Roman bath facilities appeared shortly after the Romans took control of Judea, although public access to them may have been limited. Roman-style baths dating to Herod the Great's rule were constructed at Caesarea Maritima, Herodium, Cypros (near Jericho), Jericho, Machaerus, and Masada, but all were located in a palace or fortress setting, with the exception of the bath at Masada (Nielsen 1990: 2.41–2). It was very likely public. Large public baths came later to Judea, but this was true of the eastern empire and the provinces generally.

Nevertheless, more modest bathing facilities have been documented, such as the Roman bath at Ramat Hanadiv. Located in a rural area near Caesarea Maritima, it dates to the last part of the first century BCE, and it was likely a public bath. Josephus' casual report about Herod visiting a bathhouse en route from Galilee to Judea (circa 37 BCE) suggests that small bathhouses like this must have been fairly common (*J. W.* 1.17.7 §§340–1; Hirschfeld 1995–2002: 1.39).

Outside Judea, in the larger world the earliest Christ-followers inhabited, Roman baths proliferated. There were two in Antioch before the turn of the millennium, with four more added in the first century CE. In addition to Greek bathing facilities, Ephesos had two Roman baths by the end of the first century CE and saw several more in the course of the second century. Much like Ephesos, Athens supplemented its Greek baths with a Roman bath in the middle of the first century and added five more by the close of the next century. There is also evidence for first-century CE baths at Alexandria, Thyatira, and in Galatia (Ginouvès 1962: 432, 434; Manderscheid 1988: 51, 56–7, 67–8, 108–10; Nielsen 1990: 1.96–7, 2.32). With each passing decade archaeologists uncover more Roman baths. So Fikret Yegül makes no overstatement about the Roman world when he writes, 'With the possible exception of temples, there were more baths than all other ancient building types' (2010: 2).

Placing baptism and other early Christian water rites in this broad context may not resolve the uncertainties that attend the origins of baptism. Did the water immersion of proselytes to Judaism develop early enough to serve as a prototype to Christian baptism? Did the central importance of ablution at Qumran anticipate and influence early Christian baptism? Did John the Baptist's baptizing at the Jordan River provide the template for Jesus movement practices? Convincing arguments can and have been offered for each possibility (Collins 1989), though it is most likely that multiple influences lay

behind early Christian practices (Spinks 2006: 5). Historical rather than ritual analysis is best suited to pinpoint immediate cause and local influence.

What ritual analysis, in this case, contextualization, does instead is to alert the interpreter to the big picture: the proliferation of water rituals among Judean groups emerging in the Second Temple period coincided with, and therefore should be considered a response to, Hellenization and Romanization.[1] It also suggests why a water rite as opposed to some other type of ritual became central to early Christianity. For it seems unlikely that baptism would have become a key Christian ritual had it not been for the prominence of bathing in the ruling culture of the eastern Mediterranean, first Greek, and then Roman.

A Rite of Inversion: Baptism as a One-Time Bath versus Daily Bathing

A broader context provides a frame of reference for *all* these water rites and prompts attention to their relationship. The acculturation of the eastern Mediterranean, first to the Greek and then to Roman way of life, was a complex process that entailed both assimilation and resistance by the subject populations (for the response to Romanization, see Alcock 1993). This is typical of colonization at all times and in every place. The introduction and propagation of *mikva'ot* in Hellenistic and Roman Palestine and the importance of baptism among Christ-followers constituted an acknowledgement of, and adaptation to, Greek and Roman bathing cultures. They did not, however, signal complete assimilation to those hegemonies. The very construction of a *mikveh* created an alternative location to the Greek and Roman bath and made room for a different bathing practice. As for baptism, while its presence and prominence in nascent Christianity mirrored and thus confirmed the centrality of bathing in Roman culture, the ritual eluded Roman control. Moreover, its use to mark entry into a movement in tension with Roman authority signalled resistance.

Any expression of resistance had to be very subtle and implicit, not explicit, for indirection is the very heart of how the dominated resist domination (Scott 1985). In the case of the Jesus movement, which did not have legal standing, if nonconformity was too obvious, it could trigger Roman intervention. When the Didache called for baptism in living, that is, flowing or fresh water like a river or lake (Mitchell 1995: 251), this was not an obvious dig at Roman bathing practices (Did. 7.1). Yet it may well have been a veiled criticism of them, since it was well known that Roman baths were dependent on built water supply lines and reservoirs.

[1] For earlier periods, the evidence for ritual water use is literarily and archaeologically thin, notwithstanding how heavily it was prescribed in Leviticus and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.

Subtle resistance to the Roman way may have come to expression in another way, namely, in a second obvious or tangible feature of baptism: baptism was a one-time event. This made the Christian bath strikingly different from Roman bathing, which occurred daily. A post-Constantinian writer like Jerome could point this out and be explicit about the implications: 'Is your skin rough and scurfy without baths? He who has once washed in Christ needs not to wash again' (*Epist*. 14.10 [*Wright* LCL]). But no Christian writer prior to Constantine chose to be—or could afford to be—so explicit. Tertullian, for instance, devoted a whole treatise to baptism, and he made a pointed contrast between Christian and Jewish water ritual. In *De baptismo* 15, he set the one-time-only Christian washing against daily Jewish ablution. But he said nothing about the more prominent daily bathing ritual, that of the Romans. Readers could and likely did make the inference for themselves.

If some key aspects of Christian baptismal practice were in tension with Roman bathing ritual, however subtly expressed, baptism can be classified as a rite of inversion or reversal. This sort of ritual mimics standard ritual behaviour but also alters it in some way. In doing so, it acknowledges the norm and the cultural authority behind it while providing some relief from its hegemony: 'All symbolic inversions define a culture's lineaments at the same time as they question the usefulness and the absoluteness of this ordering' (Babcock 1978: 29). Ritual inversion embodies a critique of the established order or protocol: ' "Symbolic inversion" may be broadly defined as any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values, and norms, . . .' (Babcock 1978: 14). So, while the various protocols of water and oil used in baptismal rites resembled the variation in Roman bathing etiquette (Spinks 2006: 35–6), the once-ness of baptism raised questions about the daily-ness of Roman bathing. Christians certainly visited Roman baths, but could undermine their indispensability. To quote Jerome once more, 'He who has once washed in Christ needs not to wash again' (*Epist*. 14.10).

Baptism may not originally have been a one-time event among Christ-followers, but eventually became so. The assertion in Ephesians that there is one baptism may have had a polemical edge and belied the reality in some early Christian groups (4:5). Hebrews' mention of instruction about *baptisms* (6:2), though not the common term for the practice, raises the possibility that some circles in the early church practised multiple baptisms or ablutions of some sort. There are also narratives that suggest a plurality of water rites. The gospel of John reports a foot washing that appears to be a supplement to baptism and is recommended as an ongoing or recurring practice (John 13:10–15; Neyrey 1995). Acts reports some early believers undergoing the baptism of John (18:25; 19:3), and then, in the latter instance, a second baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus. Whatever the historical reality behind these accounts, it adds to the evidence of a movement that practised various water rites and did so repetitively. Over time, however, baptism emerged as *the* water rite of the early church, which was undergone only once. As Tertullian wrote, 'So then, we enter the bath once only' (*Bapt*. 15.2; Evans 1964: 33–5).

Water Quality, Purification, and Healing

Another way of delineating the relationship between Christian baptism, bathing in *mikva'ot*, and Roman bathing is to compare the concern for water quality and quantity associated with these uses of water. In the case of the latter, Roman bathing facilities required vast amounts of water, which raised questions of supply. Consequently, aqueduct construction boomed as baths proliferated. But there was also concern about water quality. This comes to clear expression in Pliny the Elder, who devoted an entire book of his *Natural History* to a survey of water, in which he is keen to identify waters that are especially beneficial or therapeutic. After identifying lakes, rivers, and springs that cure specific maladies (31.2–20), he reports what physicians said about types of water—rainwater, snowmelt, and so forth—water temperature, and the virtues of running water over still water (31.21–4).

As for the quality and quantity of water in *mikva'ot*, there were elaborate and precise prescriptions for both by the time of the Mishnah (200 CE). In that book they occupy an entire subdivision under the division entitled *Tohoroth*, or purities. While one cannot be certain that such prescriptions existed or were in force in earlier centuries, it is reasonable to assume that *mikva'ot* had to be sufficiently filled for full immersion—their architecture indicates this use—and that the water in them had to be clean, however that standard was defined, since *mikva'ot* had to do with purity. Their location near cemeteries indicates this. Also, their proximity to wine and oil presses suggests that they were instrumental in preparing pure foods.

To some degree the early Christians exhibited the same concern about water quality. The Didache is the earliest Christian writing to prescribe the kind of water used for baptism:

> On the subject of baptism, baptize thus: after having taught all that precedes, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, in living [running] water. If for some reason you do not have living [running] water, baptize in other water; and if you are not able to in cold water, in warm water. (7:1–2; Rohrdorf 1996: 212)

A river would have provided suitable water for baptism, which is where the narrative of Acts 16:13–15 suggests Lydia was baptized. Suitability might have been the issue behind the question that the Ethiopian eunuch posed in Acts 9:37—'What is to prevent me from being baptized?'—when he and Philip came upon 'some water'. The early iconography of baptism shows it occurring in natural settings (Jensen 2011: 129–34), making its situation different from *mikveh* use and the bathhouse.

Still, as the quotation above indicates, the Didache showed flexibility about water quality, and such was also the case in other Christian writings. Several versions of the *Apostolic Tradition*, the Sahidic, Arabic, and Ethiopic, preferred flowing water for

baptism but allowed any type of water in an emergency or other exigency (21.2). Others showed indifference about water quality altogether: 'It makes no matter whether one is washed in the sea or in a pond, a river or a fountain, a cistern or a tub' (Tertullian, *Bapt*. 4.3; Evans 1964: 11). Once Christians began constructing baptisteries, the matter was settled in favour of flexibility.

If there was a shared concern about water employed in Roman baths, *mikva'ot*, and baptism, there were also differences, particularly in what prompted the concern about water quality. Pliny's treatment of water in his *Natural History* belongs to a lengthy treatment of health and medicine. Before Book 31 on water came Book 30 on various human maladies and the cure for them. As noted above, his treatment of water focused on its therapeutic and medicinal purposes. It was followed by Book 32, which treats aquatic animals, often with a view to their curative attributes. Pliny's perspective on water reflected the view of Roman medicine at the time, that water was a key weapon in the physician's arsenal against illness and for the maintenance of good health.

Bathing figured heavily in both Greek and Roman medical regimens (Fleming 2013: 23–32; Nutton 2013: 173, 208–9). This was true of all types of bathing, not just of bathing at mineral or thermal baths. Along with diet and exercise, bathing was foundational to Hippocratic medicine, and was employed in myriad ways (Jouanna 1999: 168–9). The *Regimen in Acute Diseases* is one of several places in the Hippocratic corpus that recommends bathing: 'The bath will be beneficial to many patients, sometimes when used continuously, sometimes at intervals' (65 [Jones, LCL, Hippocrates]). The link between bathing and health was so strong that the typical Roman bathed daily not simply to socialize. As Garrett Fagan notes, 'For our current purposes—to explain the bath's popularity—the chief point to note is the strong and persistent connection between bathing and good health in Roman perceptions' (1999: 86).

In the case of the *mikveh*, its purpose was to attain ritual purity rather than to gain or maintain physical health, though these aims are not unrelated in traditional cultures. As noted above, the mishnaic prescriptions about water suitable for *mikva'ot* appear in the sixth and final division of the Mishnah, which treats impurity and purity. That division or tractate offers a litany of things, conditions, and behaviours that are susceptible to, or the cause of, impurity. Averting pollution or eliminating it was a long-standing preoccupation of Israelite culture, as it has been in most human cultures. In the mishnaic era, a *mikveh*, properly built, maintained, and supplied, could remove pollution of all sorts, and it is safe to say it served the same function in the Second Temple period.[2]

There is a curative and purificatory aspect of baptism, too, expressed in early Christian writings. Cyprian, in his letter *To Donatus*, wrote about bathing in the *aquae salutaris*—a term that suggests both saving and healing (*Don*. 3). When Judas Thomas the apostle baptized the convert Mygdonia, it was to remit sins but also wash away her sores (Acts Thom. 121). In bathing one washes away sin (Acts 22:16), is made 'clean from an evil

[2] Despite the association between the Roman bath and good health and the use of *mikva'ot* for purification, water quality in these two facilities was very poor by modern standards.

conscience' (Heb. 10:22), is purified (Justin, *Dial.* 14), and is made holy and justified (1 Cor. 6:11). John the Baptist's baptism, which released one from sin, is positively and prominently displayed in the gospel narratives (e.g. Mark 1:4; Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:3). Yet Christian baptism had other functions that may not have depended on the kind of water used, which could account for the movement's relatively relaxed stance on water quality.

Baptism as a Boundary-Crossing Rite

A closer look at John the Baptist's activity reveals an aspect of baptism that was as significant or more significant than healing and purification. While John's baptism, which the canonical gospels link to the forgiveness of sins, had prominence in their narratives, they distinguish his baptism from baptism in or into the name of Jesus. Moreover, Acts makes it clear that John's baptism was incomplete or inadequate (18:25; 19:2–6). So why, apart from any historical connection John the Baptist may have had with Jesus and the Jesus movement, did John and his baptismal practices enjoy such positive attention? In all likelihood because of the location of John's activity. The Jordan River loomed large in the cultural imagination of Judeans, so it is significant that the gospels name it as the location of John's baptismal activity (Mark 1:6; Matt. 3:6; cf. John 1:28; 3:23, 26). More than a geographical landmark, the Jordan was a symbolic dividing line in Israelite tradition (Havrelock 2011). In the Joshua story, crossing it meant the end of the Israelites' wilderness wandering and entry into the promised land of settlement. In this light, John's baptizing there marked his water rite as one of boundary crossing (Crossan 1994: 41–4). The other great water crossing recorded in Israelite tradition occurred at the Red Sea, and when the apostle Paul mentioned it at 1 Corinthians 10, he understood it as his ancestors' baptism, a baptism into Moses (10:1–2). There, too, the water represented a dividing line or boundary, and crossing it marked passage from slavery under pharaoh to peoplehood in covenant with Yahweh.

While other understandings of baptism were not tied to Israelite tradition, they nonetheless conveyed the same sense of boundary crossing and status transformation. Language for such understandings came from quotidian life—from transitions through the life cycle. Being born is analogous to the baptismal act in John 3:4–5, also in Titus 3:5. Wedding imagery also figures prominently. The bridal chamber is a key image in the Gospel of Philip's discourse on initiation (67; 69). Likewise in the Acts of Thomas: the bridal chamber, understood as the place of baptism, along with bride and groom, serve as metaphors for affiliation (6–7; 124; Klijn 1962: 172). Paul invokes a funerary setting when he uses the language of dying and being buried in the act of baptism (Rom. 6:3–4). This funerary correlation was strong enough that Corinthian's Christians may well have conducted the rite of baptism for their deceased, as they assisted the departed to make their way into the world of the dead (1 Cor. 15:29; DeMaris 2008: 57–71).

All such understandings made baptism rather different from immersion in a *mikveh* and Roman bathing. The latter two maintained or reestablished a

condition—purity, cleanness, health—rather than establishing a new one. Because the baptismal act signalled a change in social situation or status, many scholars of early Christianity have classified it as a rite of passage (e.g. Thomassen 2003), sometimes causally so (Spinks 2006: xii). Yet the argument for doing so has not been made well (Lawrence 2009). Baptism did not mark transition between statuses *within* a life cycle, as a rite of passage does. Nor is there evidence from the early years for the elaborate and lengthy procedures that attend rites of passage in traditional societies (DeMaris 2008: 18–20).

Arnold van Gennep, who introduced the concept, expanded its application to include territorial passage and transfer between—not just within—social orders (1960: 186–92). This broader understanding better captures what the sources pictured and the effect of baptism on both individuals and groups. Understood in this way, baptism entailed transfer of affiliation, be it expressed as kinship-breaking and -making or establishing a patron-client tie (DeMaris 2008: 22–6). In terms of the former, believers (ideally) left behind their existing kinship bonds (Luke 14:26; Mark 10:29–30) and established new ones as adopted children of God (Gal. 3:26–8; 4:6–7). (Cicero indicates that an adopted son inherited the name, property, and sacred rites of his adoptive family but surrendered the rights of his birth family [*Dom*. 13.35]).

Entering the circle of Christ-followers was also described in patron-client terms. Paul framed his new affiliation with Christ in the language of divine patronage and benefaction (Crook 2004: 143, 151–97). God showed him beneficence or bestowed this or that benefaction (*charis*) on him, and Paul carried out God's bidding in return (1 Cor. 9:1, 16–17; 15:8–10; Gal. 1:11–17; Phil. 3:4–11). Bathing in a *mikveh* or Roman bath did not enact transactions of this sort, though the Roman bathhouse could have been the setting for negotiating client-patron relations (Tucker 2010).

Baptism and Alternate States of Consciousness

Baptism distinguished itself in a second major way from the water rites of the *mikveh* and Roman bath in its ability to mediate the Holy Spirit, or, in social-scientific terms, to induce an alternate state of consciousness (ASC) (see Theissen, Chapter 25 in this volume). Whether expressed as being in the spirit (Rev. 1:10; 4:1–2), having a revelation (Gal. 1:12; 2:1–2), or speaking in tongues or prophesying (1 Cor. 12:1–11; 14:1–40), reports of ASCs were common in emergent Christianity. The gospels are replete with accounts that are best interpreted as experiences in an ecstatic, trance, or alternate state: encounters with the resurrected Jesus, the transfiguration of Jesus, Jesus calming a storm and walking on water, for instance (Pilch 2012: 194–214). Among these accounts is Jesus' receipt of the spirit, which occurred at his baptism (Mark 1:9–11; Matt. 3:13–17; Luke 3:21–2; DeMaris 2002).

While there are reports of spontaneous entry into an ASC (e.g. Acts 9:10; 10:44; 11:28; 16:9), Jesus' receipt of spirit at baptism seems to have been the model for how a believer gained access to the spirit world (see Shantz, Chapter 27 in this volume). The baptism associated with Jesus was one of the spirit (Mark 1:8; Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). Other New Testament documents link baptism and spirit bestowal: Acts has Peter cluster the two together in 2:38. Paul describes baptism and spirit bestowal as concurrent events: 'For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit' (1 Cor. 12:13). The Gospel of John also links the two, if being born again or from above refers to baptism: 'No one can enter the kingdom of God without begin born of water and Spirit' (3:5).

How tightly were water and spirit bound together? Early baptismal iconography commonly had a dove, symbolic of the spirit, hovering overhead, and in some iterations pouring water from its beak onto the baptizand (Jensen 2011: 5, 19). Paul's comment above suggests that that spirit was conceived of as potable liquid like water that one ingested (John 7:37–9; cf. Ign. *Rom*. 7:2). On the other hand, Acts describes a few occasions when baptism alone was not enough to bestow the spirit. A second ritual, the laying on of hands, brought the spirit (8:12–17; 19:5–7). Such reports may indicate that baptism was not foolproof, which is true of any ritual. Or perhaps the writer knew about variations of baptism that entailed the laying on of hands, which was the case in some early Christian baptismal liturgies (cf. *Trad. ap*. 21.21). Yet another activity associated with baptism, fasting (e.g. Did. 7:4; *Trad. ap*. 20.7–8 Sahidic, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions), may have aided in the bestowal of spirit, because it was known to induce trance among believers (e.g. Acts 13:1–3). Fasting has been employed in many human cultures to trigger ASCs (Craffert 2008: 232–4).

Water Use in the Cult of Asklepios: Cataloguing Bathing's Effects

Baptism's ability to trigger an ASC echoed its function as a boundary-crossing rite in that both marked transition and transformation, enabling entry into a new social world or into the spirit world, where one had a different status. To find counterparts to these functions in the ancient Mediterranean, one must look beyond Roman bathing and *mikveh* immersion, whose functions were restorative rather than transformative. More like the Christian use of water were the water rites of the Asklepios cult, which exhibited a wide range of water usage. That water was essential to the activity of the cult is reflected in the comments that Vitruvius makes about the siting of temples, for he notes that Asklepieia—sanctuaries or temples of Asklepios—in particular needed adequate and suitable springs or fountains of water (*De architectura* 1.2.7). Water had to be readily

available because those approaching Asklepios for healing typically bathed before entering the temple precinct (*temenos*) or the temple itself (Aristophanes, *Plut*. 655–60; Pausanias, *Descr*. 5.13.3; Edelstein and Edelstein 1945: 2.148–9). Such bathing purified suppliants and also allowed them to enter the *temenos* or temple.

Moreover, such bathing—sometimes a second bath—prepared suppliants for entry into an ASC (Nutton 2013: 110). Bathing and sacrifice were prerequisite for incubating or sleeping overnight in the *abaton*, the structure in the sanctuary precinct where suppliants slept and had their dream of, or visionary encounter with, Asklepios (Pettis 2015: 43). The god might heal them immediately, but his prescribing a cure was also very common. Often the cure entailed bathing in one or another body of water, including bathhouses (*IG* IV^2, fasc. 1, no. 126; Aristides, *Oratio* 42.8; *Sacred Tales* 2.18–21; 2.45; 2.48–55; 2.74; 2.78–80; 2.82; 3.6; 4.11; 5.49–55). Though the evidence for water use at Asklepieia comes from disparate sources, a useful profile emerges. The Asklepios cult corroborates the taxonomy of possible functions that has emerged from the comparison of water use in baptism, the Roman bath, and *mikva'ot*: (1) curative or medicinal; (2) purificatory; (3) enabling or marking boundary crossing; and (4) preparing for, or triggering entry into, an ASC.

The actual configuration of water rites varied between Asklepieia, and the profile of water use at each Asklepieion changed over time. At Corinth, for example, the archaeology of the Asklepieion documents water facilities of all sorts with significant change in them over time. If the site was minimally supplied with water in the Classical period, by the Hellenistic period there are two noteworthy features: a small water basin located by the entrance to the *temenos* and temple altar (East Water Basin; Lang 1977: 15, Figure 15), and a lustral room adjacent and connected to the *abaton*. The small basin's location suggests its intended function: to provide water for purification before sacrificing and entering the temple. The lustral room was equipped with steps and a platform separated from a draw basin by a high parapet. Its location and elaborate design demonstrate how important bathing was in preparation for incubating in the temple (Roebuck 1951: 26–7, 42–51).

The Roman period brought dramatic change to Corinth's Asklepieion. Early Roman construction covered the water basin at the gateway to the *temenos*, and the lustral room went out of use after the Hellenistic period (Roebuck 1951: 27; 50; 79–82). Water use persisted, however, in no small part because the Asklepieion was adjacent to the numerous reservoirs and draw basins of the Lerna Fountain. Bathing for curative purposes may have dominated water use at the site in the Roman period, in keeping with Roman sensibilities about the medicinal benefits of water and bathing (Wickkiser 2010).

Baptism's functions very likely varied in nascent Christianity, too, but emphasis, at least in the literary sources, falls on boundary crossing, spirit bestowal (ASC entry), and purification (elimination of sin), and not the curative or medicinal. (Baptism may have been popular among the non-literate for healing, but evidence for it is lacking.) There are apocryphal stories about the infant Jesus in which his bath water is used to cure illness and blindness ([*Arab*.] *Gos. Inf*. 27–8). Also, Tertullian compared the saving action of baptism to the story in the Gospel of John about an angel that stirs the pool at Bethesda, thereby curing the first person to set foot in it (5:2–9 with later variant;

Bapt. 5.5). But baptism's healing effects were not stressed. Healing rituals, which were well developed in early Christian circles, employed a different set of practices. Moreover, Christians may have resisted connecting bathing with healing because the two were so strongly linked in Roman culture.

The earliest Christians also developed purification rituals, namely, the system of penance, to supplement baptism. To the extent that baptism functioned as a one-time, boundary-crossing rite, it became unavailable for removing post-entry impurity, which was a problem (Heb. 6:4–6; Herm. *Mand*. 4.3.3–5; Herm. *Vis*. 2.2.4) (see Roitto, Chapter 24 in this volume). So, by the third century the rituals of confession and absolution emerged to remove sin. (Some Christians delayed baptism until their deathbeds in order to eliminate the possibility of post-baptismal sin, but church leaders condemned this practice.)

Baptism as ASC trigger and as boundary-crossing rite enjoys prominence in the sources, and there are good reasons why. The ritualization of ASC entry, as opposed to its spontaneous occurrence, gave community leaders some control over it, as well as making it available to all community entrants. Any elitism based on claims about who had access to the spirit world was thereby undercut. Baptism's function as a social boundary-crossing or kinship-making rite made it a functional equivalent to animal sacrifice, which was a primary means of kinship-making and kinship maintenance in the ancient Mediterranean (Jay 1992: 30–60, 94–111; Stowers 1995). The less Christians practised animal sacrifice—the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE was a watershed event in this regard—the more baptism functioned as a substitute kinship-making rite.

Initiation, Boundary Crossing, and Making Kin

Also closely corresponding to baptism as a boundary-crossing rite were water rites associated with initiation into ancient Mediterranean religions, particularly the so-called mystery religions (Ginouvès 1962: 375–404; see also Martin, Chapter 19 in this volume). Water rites were especially important in the Isis (and Sarapis) cult; her sanctuaries were typically equipped with elaborate water installations (Wild 1981; Bremmer 2014: 119–20). Apuleius provides us with a full description of initiation into the Isis cult at the end of *The Metamorphoses* or *Golden Ass*, and it includes several water rites. Though the account is fictional, it probably approximates what initiates actually underwent (see Petersen, Chapter 21 in this volume).

The closing book of the *Metamorphoses* narrates the transformation of Lucius, the story's human protagonist, from donkey back to human, an apt metaphor for his rescue by Isis. As the final book opens, the asinine Lucius washes himself in the sea and then enjoys an epiphany of Isis in dream state—bathing triggers an ASC—who instructs him how to return to human form (11.1–6). What follows are two intertwined water rites that

allow him to enter the temple of Isis (Iseum) and to affiliate both with her divine household and the ranks of Isis devotees (11.23). The chief Isiac priest, Mithras, takes Lucius to a Roman bath, where he undergoes a regular bath. Then Mithras gives him an additional washing (Wild 1981: 143–4; Pearson 1999: 48; Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2000: 331). This ritual action gives Lucius access to the Iseum at Cenchreae where he is presented at the feet of the goddess. Other steps in the initiation follow, including more bathing, but the dual washing clearly marks not simply purification but also boundary crossing and kinship-making (see Martin, Chapter 19 in this volume). Lucius has entered the divine household, and Mithras, who bathed Lucius, has become his father (11.25). Bathing in the Isis religion functioned very much like it did in nascent Christianity: to trigger ASCs, to purify, and to allow boundary crossing or to make kin.

Administered Bathing and Its Social Implications

This example from Isis religion is particularly illuminating because it points to another way in which baptism differed from Roman bathing and *mikveh* immersion: baptism was administered (Uro 2016: 85). While there were attendants at Greek and Roman baths, and the elite went to the baths accompanied by their slaves, ancient Mediterranean bathers essentially bathed themselves.[3] In contrast to this, in Christian bathing, whatever its precise pattern, believers were baptized by a person authorized to do so, just as the high priest Mithras bathed Lucius. Ignatius, for example, insisted it was not lawful to baptize without a bishop's presence or approval (*Smyrn*. 8.2). Tertullian also reserved the administration of baptism to the bishop (*Bapt*. 17.1). The singular Thecla, who baptized herself in an emergency situation—fighting animals in an amphitheater!—is the only instance of auto-baptism in the ancient record and is clearly an exception (Acts Paul 34).

The example from Apuleius is also valuable because it highlights the dual nature of boundary crossing. In embryonic Christianity, baptism gave those who underwent it entry into a divine relationship and into a symbolic family of believers. One became a daughter or son of a divinity *and* a brother or sister of one's co-believers. Paul articulated the effect of baptism most fully in Galatians. It marked the believer's affiliation with Christ and incorporation into God's chosen people as the seed or offspring of Abraham. It also signalled believers' adoption as children of God, evidenced by the bestowal of God's spirit on them (3:27–4:3). This same adoption and spirit language recurs in Romans (8:15, 23) and the post-Pauline letter of Ephesians (1:5). As for sibling language used fictively or symbolically, Acts and the epistolary literature are thick with it, especially the Pauline letters, James, and 1 John. Speakers

[3] Some Hippocratic bathing therapies called for the patient's servants to conduct the bathing (Jouanna 1999: 168).

and letter writers typically addressed their fellow believers as brother and sister, and it is reasonable to assume this was a standard form of address among believers. Hence, baptism was a kinship-making rite, forming a familial bond between non-kin. Understood as such, it functioned much like initiation rites in mystery religions (Martin 1997: 153–4).

Kinship-making did not stop with generating brothers and sisters, however. Baptizer and baptizand formed a parent-child or a hierarchical relationship. The iconography of baptism, in which the baptizand is typically portrayed as a small youth, confirms this arrangement (Jensen 2011: 5; see Jensen, Chapter 34 in this volume). Rituals in general are instrumental in establishing and reinforcing a social order (Rappaport 1979: 192–4). They do not simply express it, they create it: 'Rituals are themselves the very production and negotiation of power relations' (Bell 1992: 196). Such relations are established bodily: the way people conduct themselves in relation to others during ritual activity betokens their social relationship (Bourdieu 1990: 71–2). In the case of baptism, the contrast between active and passive participation in the rite, baptizer versus baptized, was a palpable indication of who was in charge and who was subordinate. Hence, baptism did not simply bring people into community. Baptism also structured it (see Hylen, Chapter 28 in this volume).

Nowhere is the powerful and complex social agency of baptism better displayed than in 1 Corinthians. To the Corinthian Christians, a group evidently riven by factions, Paul referenced baptism as the common experience in which all community members shared. The baptismal act, he maintained, created a unified community, which Paul called 'one body' (12:12–13). At the same time, Paul implied that the conflicting loyalties that threatened group unity stemmed at least in part from who baptized whom (1:11–13):

> For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, 'I belong to Paul', or 'I belong to Apollos', or 'I belong to Cephas', or 'I belong to Christ'. Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

This last question implicated baptismal practices in the divisiveness that plagued the Corinthian house churches. The lines that immediately follow, in which Paul denied having baptized many at Corinth—he immediately qualifies the denial—were his attempt at damage control (1:14–16). They underscore baptism's ability to create allegiances that could unravel a group's fabric. So potent and potentially disruptive was the baptizer-baptizand bond that Paul finally resorted to the disingenuous claim that he was sent to preach, not baptize (1:17), as though an apostle's duty could be subdivided (DeMaris 2013: 12–14). So, baptism may have been an ideal ritual for establishing and structuring circles of believers, but it had to be administered carefully, lest it create rival hierarchies. Tight control was necessary: 'The supreme right of giving [baptism] belongs to the high priest, which is the bishop' (Tertullian, *Bapt*. 17.1; Evans 1964: 35).

Conclusion: Obvious Features of Baptism in Their Social Context

This chapter has focused on obvious, tangible, and social features of baptism and placed them in the context of culturally important water rites, namely, Roman bathing practices and the use of *mikva'ot* or stepped water installations in Hellenistic and Roman Palestine. In this context, the prominence of a water rite in emergent Christianity signalled accommodation to Roman culture. At the same time, restricting baptism to a one-time event (versus daily Roman bathing) signalled resistance to Roman hegemony. The rite inverted Roman practice. Along with baptism's use of water and its once-ness, other salient features were these: baptism marked the crossing of a boundary and it was administered. Baptism marked both entry into the circle of Christ-followers and entry into the spirit world or an alternate state of conscious (ASC), described in the sources as receipt of the Holy Spirit. The baptizand's place in the community was established by who conducted the baptism; the administrator and recipient of baptism formed a parent-child kinship tie.

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CHAPTER 23

MEAL PRACTICES

VOJTĚCH KAŠE

Introduction

Meals play a central role in the social life of any society (Fox 2003), and as such represent a common occasion for ritualization (Han 2004). The world of the ancient Mediterranean is no exception in this respect, as is broadly documented by both archaeological and literary material (Dunbabin 2003; Donahue 2015). In this chapter, I discuss how early Christian meals, as part of this cultural environment, became increasingly ritualized over time, sometimes even losing their primary function of feeding the participants. For the purpose of this analysis, the social functions of these meals, often discussed in recent scholarship (e.g. Smith 2003; Taussig 2009; and Ascough, Chapter 12 in this volume) will be ignored here.

A comparative analysis of early Christian meal practices should consider, on the one hand, the evidence for meals occurring in associations (see Acsough, Chapter 12 in this volume), and, on the other hand, the role of food and meal in early Judaism (Marks and Taussig 2014). Recently, it has been argued that these two clusters of material should be seen as parts of the same cultural environment, rather than as two independent or even mutually exclusive sources of inspiration for the study of early Christian meals (see, in particular, Smith 2003). Rather than trying to decide which elements of early Christian meals are rooted in the Jewish environment and which are anchored in a broader Graeco-Roman cultural context, we need to understand that in designing their meals, the ancient Mediterranean adherents of the cult of Christ were drawing on the same cultural values and were constrained by the same cultural norms of the Graeco-Roman world as their peers wedded to Judaism or other Graeco-Roman religions.

Such an understanding was not always the case in older scholarship. First of all, it was quite common to approach the tradition of the Last Supper as a phenomenon branching out from the Jewish Passover meal tradition (e.g. Jeremias 1949). However, we have almost no evidence for actual Jewish meal practices in Palestine during this period; furthermore, even if we did have such evidence, there is no reason to expect that such practices followed a generally widespread pattern (Marcus 2013). From what scanty

evidence is available, it appears that Judaic festive meals in Palestine were greatly influenced by Graeco-Roman norms (Kraemer 2010: 413–18). It therefore does not make sense to argue that the background of Jesus' Last Supper is in the Judaic tradition of the Passover meal, and that consequently this was the source upon which Jesus' followers modelled their communal meals known as the Eucharist. It seems more appropriate to describe both Judaic and Christian meals as part of a social practice that draws on the same cultural sources (Marcus 2013).

Another issue concerns certain trends towards creating a typology of early Christian meals. Older scholarship tended to assume that there were two main types of early Christian meals (e.g. Lietzmann 1926): one anchored in Jesus' Last Supper, focused on remembering his death and later called the 'Eucharist'; the other rooted in Jesus' ordinary meals during his lifetime, later celebrated under the heading of 'breaking of the bread' or *agape*. According to this view, the first form took on a predominantly symbolic meaning and ceased to be seen as a proper meal during the first couple of centuries; the second, in contrast, continued to maintain the form of a dinner and was still regarded by Christians as involving connotations of a common banquet (Tertullian, *Apol.* 39). Recent scholarship, however, has shown this dichotomy to be groundless (McGowan 1997). We now know that different Christian communities called their meal gatherings by different names, and that at least some communities gathered for more than one type of meal. In this chapter, therefore, I discuss meals in a broad sense, covering all forms of eating in Christian gatherings.

Bridging Gaps by Means of Ritual Theory

To warn readers about the scarcity of evidence concerning the earliest Christian liturgy, Colin Buchanan compares our situation to someone who is trying to learn about Africa by looking out of the window while flying over the continent. Through the gaps in the clouds, he will gain 'a hasty glimpse of water on two occasions, of a snowcapped mountain on one, of a desert on one, of a city on one, and of an extensive ostrich farm on one' (Buchanan 2007a: 8; 2007b: 153). Buchanan asks: what can we learn about Africa this way? Certainly not much. By analogy to such a traveller, we need to understand that as historians we are in a similar situation: our knowledge of early Christians' ritual meals is based on only a few relevant historical sources.

Realizing our situation, should we give up entirely on the search for patterns or developmental trajectories in early Christian ritual history? I believe this is not the right solution. Instead, drawing on recent advances in behavioural, cognitive, and social sciences, in this chapter I seek to demonstrate that even though we cannot actually observe early Christians celebrating their ritual meals (in that respect historians can envy ethnographers), we can make certain assumptions as to what could and could not be the

case, or what is more and less likely. In that way, we can 'bridge the gaps', forming at least some 'educated guesses' as to what might lie beneath the clouds.

My approach is inspired by Risto Uro's programmatic statement, 'that ritual theory is indispensable for the study of Christian beginnings, and that the ritual approach to early Christianity is greatly enhanced by the application of cognitive theories of ritual' (2016: 6). Cognitive theories of ritual represent a fresh alternative to the majority of current anthropological theories, providing explanatory models of ritual informed by recent advances in the study of the human mind. These models have the potential to advance the research field by formulating testable hypotheses concerning the psychological machinery underlying ritual and its dynamic.

It has often been argued in the literature that the time of grand theories of ritual is irretrievably over (cf. Uro 2016: 55). Rather than constructing such theories, it is more helpful to take a pragmatic approach, focusing on the partial constitutive elements of the phenomena covered under the academic concept of 'ritual', in particular on their respective psychological and social foundations and functions. The terms 'ritualization' and 'ritualized behaviour', which now find broad applicability in cognitive theories of ritual, are of particular value in this regard.

In the research programme of the cognitive science of religion, ritualization is understood as a semi-automatic process, whereby an ordinary activity is modified into a ritualized behaviour characterized by *compulsion* (one must perform a particular sequence), *rigidity* (it must be performed the right way), *redundancy* (the same actions are often repeated within the ritual), and *goal-demotion* (the actions are divorced from their usual goal) (Liénard and Boyer 2006: 815). Such a process involves a crucial psychological component: the ritualized behaviour is driven by particular innate and evolutionary evolved psychological mechanisms, which are responsible for the fact that ritualization occurs more often during particular life stages (e.g. pregnancy) and that some types of activities (e.g. cleansing) are more often ritualized than others. The preparation and consumption of food also count among activities highly prone to ritualization. Thus, psychologically driven ritualization can at least partly affect culturally shared collective rituals, such as family or communal meals. In the light of these theoretical insights, we can now ask whether any such aspects of ritualization occur in our first- and second-century Christian sources.

Last Supper Accounts

Any account of the development of Christian meal practices has to begin with our earliest explicit evidence: Paul's 1 Corinthians 11:17–34. In this passage, Paul is seeking to rectify the meal-related behaviour of the Corinthian Christians, among whom divisions (*schismata*) had emerged in this respect. At these gatherings, 'each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk' (11:21, ESV translation). Paul

considers such behaviour inappropriate for the congregation of God (*ekklēsia tou theou*, 11:22), and reminds the Corinthians of the tradition concerning the last meal of Jesus:

> (11:23b) [T]he Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread (*elaben arton*), (24) and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said (*eucharistēsas eklasen kai eipen*), 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' (25) In the same way (*hōsautōs*) also he took the cup, after supper, saying (*kai to potērion meta to deipnēsai legōn*), 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' (26) For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (27) Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.

Much ink has been spilt comparing the wording of the sentences ascribed here to Jesus to those found in the Synoptic Gospels (Bradshaw 2004: 3–15). Rather than entering into this debate, I focus on the description of Jesus' actual actions in these accounts, and on what we can learn from them about the ritualization of early Christian meal practices.

First of all, in Paul we find a pattern in which Jesus first *takes a bread*, then *breaks it* while *giving thanks*, and finally says the so-called *words of institution* (i.e. 'This is my body … '). What is remarkable, the *words of institution* are here reported as being said *after* the thanksgiving and breaking, not as part of it. The same is also the case in Luke, whose version is closely related to that of Paul in a number of respects (cf. Bradshaw 2004: 3–5; McGowan 2014: 28): 'And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it (*labōn arton eucharistēsas eklasen*) and gave it to them, saying (*kai edōken autois legōn*) …' (Luke 22:19).

Analogously, the Greek text in particular reveals a structural similarity between Mark and Matthew (Mark 14:22: *labōn arton eulogēsas eklasen kai edōken autois kai eipen* [ESV: he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said]; Matt. 26:26: *labōn hō Iēsous arton kai eulogēsas eklasen kai dous tois mathētais eipen* [Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said]). Compared to Paul and Luke, there is one difference in particular in the words used: rather than referring to giving thanks, the writer uses the active participle of the verb *eulogeō* (to bless). Nevertheless, when these two accounts follow up with the cup, they consistently speak of *giving thanks* (Mark 14:23: *labōn potērion* [took the cup] *eucharistēsas* [gave thanks] *edōken autois* [gave to them]; Matt. 26:27: *labōn potērion* [took the cup] *kai eucharistēsas* [and gave thanks] *edōken autois legōn* [gave to them saying]). As we shall see below, this variation (*eucharistō* versus *eulogeō*) probably reflects the fact that the two families of accounts employ a vocabulary used by communities occupying different cultural settings.

What do we learn from these narratives about the ritualization of early Christian meals? We have seen that in all these accounts Jesus' behaviour is described as following a general pattern: (1) he takes the bread (and cup); (2) he gives thanks for it (pronounces a prayer); (3) he breaks the bread; and (4) he gives pieces of it to his disciples. A similar observation by Gregory Dix led to his famous study *The Shape of the Liturgy* (1945). In terms of our present objectives, however, what is most remarkable in the above observations is the intimate linkage between the giving of thanks and the breaking of bread: in

all accounts something like a stable formula seems to occur, linking the two steps into a single and rigid procedure. In view of this, Jesus' action here can be described as being partly ritualized in the above-mentioned specific sense. We may ask, however: how unique is this pattern as compared to other meal settings in the New Testament?

Feeding of the Multitude

I have already suggested that it is illusory to see the beginnings of the Eucharist simply as springing out of the Last Supper tradition: '"Last Supper" itself implies a whole series of previous suppers' (McGowan 2014: 20; cf. Bradshaw 2004: 2). We should indeed realize that many other situations from Jesus' career are likewise situated in a meal setting. In that respect, the stories of the miraculous feeding of the multitude occupy a central place.

Some version of the feeding miracle is included in all four Gospels. Mark, followed by Matthew, actually offers two different versions of it (Matt. 14:13–21, 15:32–16:10; Mark 6:31–44, 8:1–9; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:5–15). For the purpose of our analysis, one important detail is what Jesus does with the loaves of bread and the fishes before he distributes them among the people, assisted by the disciples. In describing the feeding of the five thousand, Mark and Matthew use almost identical wording:

> And taking the five loaves and the two fishes he looked up to heaven (*anablēpsas eis ton ouranon*) and said a blessing and broke the loaves (*eulogēsen kai kateklasen tous artous/klasas*) and gave them to the disciples (*kai edidou tois mathētais/edōken tois mathētais tous artous*) … (Mark 6:41/Matt. 14:19)

A very similar wording is used in a version of the same story preserved in Luke 9:16. In the case of feeding of the four thousand—reported only by Mark and Matthew—we find a slightly different pattern: 'And he took (*labōn/elaben*) the seven loaves (/and the fish), and having given thanks, he broke them (*eucharistēsas eklasen*) and gave them to his disciples (*kai edidou tois mathētais autou*)' (Mark 8:6/Matt. 15:36).

It seems plausible that the two stories actually reflect two layers of the same tradition, based on one idealized event. In all these accounts we can identify something that looks like a rigid formula, very similar to the one we witnessed in the context of the Last Supper narratives. In the first set of accounts we find the *taking of the food, looking up to heaven*, the *blessing and breaking of the food*, and its *distribution*. In the second, the *blessing* is replaced by *thanksgiving* (i.e. *eucharistō* rather than *eulogeō*) and *looking up to heaven* is completely omitted (such is also the case in the version offered by John in 6:11).

As in the case of the Last Supper accounts, different versions prefer different terms for the prayer: *eucharistō* versus *eulogeō*. A majority of scholars have considered these two terms to be close to synonymous, being based on two different translations of the same Hebrew original: *brk*. During the first decades of Christianity, however, at least some communities apparently started to prefer the term *eucharistō* for prayers over the food

(see Sandt and Flusser 2002: 318–25; Burkhart 1994: 55–6). According to this view, what we are witnessing in our sources are two layers reflecting this development, with an anachronistic projection of this terminology onto the life of Jesus.

Breaking of the Bread

Regardless of the differences, one important aspect is shared by all the above passages referring to a miraculous feeding: the connection between the prayer and the breaking of the bread. This connection is further deepened by other meal stories reported by the author of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. It is worth noting that the verb *klaō* (to break) is associated in the New Testament exclusively with bread. We have already seen that Paul uses the term in the context of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians (10:16 and 11:24) and that in Mark it occurs in the feeding of four thousand and the Last Supper (8:6, 8:19, 14:22). It is also used very similarly by Matthew (14:19, 15:36, 26:26). Mark and Matthew further share the collocation *eucharistēsas eklasen*. In Luke, it is present consistently from the Last Supper context (22:19, 24:30) onward; towards the end of the Gospel, and especially in Acts, it seems to be used almost as a technical term (Acts 2:46, 20:7, 20:11, 27:35).

Towards the end of the Gospel of Luke, the author uses the term 'breaking of the bread' as the name for an activity enabling recognition of the resurrected Jesus by the two disciples at Emmaus (Luke 24:30–1; 24:35: 'how he let them to be recognized by the breaking of the bread' [*en tē klasei tou artou*]). In the Book of Acts, this nomenclature is used in two additional places. The first is in reference to an activity constituting the life of the earliest church in Jerusalem (2:42). In the second occurrence, it is named as an activity shaping Paul's meeting with the Christian congregation at Troas on the first day of the week; this is followed by Paul's long speech until midnight in an upper room and by the resurrection of Eutychus, who falls out of the window (20:7–12). In addition to this, and in a form highly reminiscent of the feeding stories, the breaking of bread also follows Paul's prayer of thanksgiving to God on a sinking ship in front of 276 men on board ('he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat' [*labōn arton eucharistēsen tō theō enōpion pantōn kai klasas ērxato esthiein*], 27:35).

Ritualization of Meals and Words of Prayer

In the passages discussed so far we have identified several cues of ritualization in the meals of Jesus and his earliest followers. Since most of these sources are retrospective narratives, and therefore highly prone to idealization, they should be taken with some scepticism.

There is, however, one exception in this respect which holds particular value for us: Paul's 1 Corinthians, dealing with the real life of some Christians during the 50s of the first century.

I have already stressed that in 1 Cor. 11:17–34, and indeed in all of the New Testament Last Supper accounts, there is a clear distinction between the breaking of bread and thanksgiving, on the one hand, and the words of institution, on the other. Contrary to older New Testament scholarship, which assumed that the words of institution in 1 Cor. 11 derive from liturgical usage (e.g. Murphy-O'Connor 1976; Theissen 1982), there has been a growing conviction in recent decades that the narratives were not used in this way for a long time, no sooner than the fourth century. Even then, they appear to be innovations in Eucharistic prayers rather than the continuation of an ancient tradition (Bradshaw 2004: 11; see also McGowan 1999: 79; Stowers 2011: 136). Thus we should ask: if it was not the words of institution, what was the actual content of the earliest Christian prayers sanctifying their food and drink?

There is a long-standing debate concerning the extent to which these prayers were modelled upon contemporary Jewish practices, and how much of their content was specifically Christian (Leonhard 2007; Rouwhorst 2007). In tracing the origins of the Jewish table blessing, reference is often made to the *Book of Jubilees* 22:6–9, which contains a prayer ascribed to Abraham. Some scholars identify a tripartite structure in it, marking later sources (Sandt and Flusser 2002: 318). It might well reflect a Jewish table prayer from the period around 100 BC (see Burkhart 1994: 53). Substantial attention has also been paid to the tradition of blessing after the meal (*birkat hamazon*). However, even if we could prove that a form of this prayer existed already before the *Mishnah*, it has been convincingly shown that its actual wording comes from a much later period (Sandt and Flusser 2002: 313). Following the recent scholarly trend of situating the various aspects of Judaic meals in a broader Graeco-Roman setting (Brumberg-Kraus et al. 2014), one scholar has even argued that to a certain extent the tradition of blessing after the meal can be interpreted as a Jewish reaction to the Graeco-Roman habit of libation, standing between the dinner and the drinking party, rather than a practice rooted in Judaism before the fall of the Temple (Marks 2014).

With such inconclusive evidence concerning contemporary Jewish practices, what do we actually know about the content and form of early Christian prayers over food? Here a special position is occupied by two passages from the Didache, a document written down between the end of the first century and the beginning of the second, probably in Syria (Jefford 2013). First of all, it is noteworthy that this is our earliest evidence using the term *eucharistia* in a technical sense, as referring both to the meal-related prayer (9:1 and 10:1) and to the food which is being blessed (9:5). It is also the only early text which explicitly and strictly prescribes the actual words to be recited over the bread and wine, in a prayer both before and after the meal. What follows is a selection from these passages, with special attention to the content of the first part (trans. Jefford 2013: 35–6):

> 9.1: And regarding the eucharist (*peri de tēs eucharistias*), give thanks like this (*houtōs eucharistēsate*):
> 9.2: First, regarding the cup: We thank you, our Father, for the holy vine your child (*paidos*) David (. . .)

> 9.3: And regarding the broken bread (*klasmatos*): We thank you, our Father, for life and knowledge (*gnōseōs*), which you made known to us through your child (*paidos*) Jesus—yours is the glory forever.
> 9.4: Just as this broken bread (*klasma*) was scattered over the hills and, coming together, became one, may your community (*ekklēsia*) likewise come together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom—for yours are the power and the glory through Jesus Christ forever.
> 10.1: And after being filled, give thanks as follows (*houtōs eucharistēsate*).
> (. . .)

Overall, these prayers do not involve any reference to Jesus's death as a messianic event; nor do they refer to the Last Supper or give any indication of a symbolic connection between the bread and wine and Jesus' body and blood. This 'absence' has led to endless controversy. Many scholars have even doubted that the prayers can be seen as Eucharistic in the proper sense of the word (e.g. Rordorf 1997: 229). However, it seems that any distinction between the Eucharist proper and an ordinary communal meal goes against the text as it stands (e.g. Wengst 1984: 45–6).

Even if the prayers do not reflect the actual practices of a community, and are in fact the creation of a solitary innovator, the later reception of some of their parts (esp. 9:4) reveals the widespread popularity of the text (Sarapion, *Prayer* 1; De virginitate 12–13; *Const. ap.* 7.25; Cyprian, *Ep.* 63.13). These allusions, however, are literary rather than liturgical, and have been significantly modified in their wording (for a detailed comparison, see Bradshaw 2004: 116–21). It thus appears that despite the popularity of their content, any aspiration the Didache had to prescribe what was actually to be said in these prayers was a failure.

Putting aside the sole exception of the Didache, we must wait more than a century before we arrive at other sources containing something that looks like a prescription for a fixed Eucharistic prayer (see Larson-Miller, Chapter 31 in this volume). It thus seems that the ritualization of the words over bread and wine was a much slower process than it might appear, in light of the critical evaluation of the available sources. It is also intriguing that the exceptionality of the Didache with respect to fixing the prayers is partly counterbalanced by the fact that the ritual prescription concerns only those meal gatherings where no prophet is present. If the contrary is true, 'allow the prophets to give thanks as they wish (*eucharistein hosa thelousin*)'. This brings us to the issue of ritual specialists.

Ritualization of Meals and the Role of Ritual Specialists

The freedom offered to the prophets corresponds nicely to a remark in Justin Martyr's *First Apology* 65–67, a passage which is considered to be the most comprehensive account of early Christian liturgy from the first two centuries (Buchanan 2007a: 5). The

passage refers to a person called *proestōs* presiding over the Eucharistic celebration, who, Justin reports, pronounces the prayer 'according to his ability (*hosē dynamis autō*)' (*1 Apol.* 67.5). From the perspective of ritual theory, this point deserves special attention: The ritual here is shaped by *who* is performing it (the presiding person), rather than *what* he or she is doing (i.e. reciting the words of prayer).

According to the cognitive scholars of religion Robert N. McCauley and E. Thomas Lawson (2002), one crucial issue for an intuitive judgement of any ritual by those who observe it or participate in it—i.e. whether or not they perceive it as efficacious—is whether a religious specialist is involved in it, and if so, in what way. One kind of ritual, which these scholars classify as a *special agent ritual*, is characterized by the fact that the main act constituting the ritual is performed by a clearly identifiable individual, and that this person is perceived as possessing special religious power or authority. A good example is the modern Roman Catholic priest and his role during the Eucharist. The right to celebrate the Eucharist is given to him in the act of ordination by a bishop, which significantly changes his status among his co-religionists. From the moment he is ordained, he has the right to conduct ritual acts restricted to persons holding the same status. If he was not ordained correctly, his activity in the role of a priest is questionable. In other words, the main factor determining whether the ritual of the Eucharist will or will not be efficacious is whether it is celebrated by an appropriately ordained priest or by someone else. The crucial point emerging from Lawson-McCauley's theory is that one's capacity to judge the efficacy of a ritual is not based on one's knowledge of Christianity, but is significantly influenced by our innate psychology.

This theory leads us to take a closer look at the role of ritual specialists in the earliest Christian sources. In 1 Cor. 10:16, Paul is discussing the appropriate understanding of 'the cup of blessing which we bless' and 'the bread which we break'. Paul's use of the plural form of the verb (*eulogoumen* and *klōmen*) suggests a question: whom are we to see as responsible for the blessing? Is Paul referring to an individual with a special charismatic gift or office, or, for instance, to the *paterfamilias* of the house where the Corinthian community is meeting? Almost the same question can be asked in respect to the Didache 9:1 and 10:1, where we likewise find the plural. Here again, the *paterfamilias* would be a natural candidate to fill this role, at least on an occasion when no prophet is present (cf. Did. 10:7, discussed above). In Justin, the praying person is specified by the puzzling title *proestōs*. This title seems to refer to a function connected to the church, to say the least. It is uncertain, however, whether such a person is to be considered a ritual specialist in the strict sense of the term.

In Ignatius of Antioch we encounter a completely different story. As if confirming the basic hypothesis of the Lawson-McCauley theory, Ignatius repeatedly insists: 'Let that Eucharist be considered valid that occurs under the bishop (*hē hypo episkopon ousa*) or the one to whom he entrusts it (*hō an autos epitrepsē*)' (*Smyr.* 8.1; cf. *Eph.* 5.2; *Magn.* 7.1–2; *Trall.* 2). Throughout his letters, Ignatius is maintaining his model of locally based churches led by one bishop, accompanied by a plenum of presbyters and assisted by a collective of deacons. The Eucharist occupies a central place in the life of these communities, and is crucially associated with the role of bishop (Brent 2009: 71–94). Consistent

with the main prediction of the Lawson-McCauley theory, evidence from later centuries indicates that the Church found the model suggested by Ignatius and others to be highly attractive, despite the numerous controversies over what exactly it was that was to be performed by bishops alone.

Ritualization of Meals in Time and Space

When, how often, and where did early Christians gather for communal meals? From the perspective of ritualization, these are highly interesting questions. A number of sources indicate that Christians started to meet quite early on a regular basis—already around the middle of the first century, preferring the time slot of Sunday evening (cf. Luke 24:14–43; John 20:19, 26; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10; Pet. 35, 50; Did. 14.1; Barn. 15.9; Just., *1 Apol*. 67.3; see Alikin 2010: 40–9). From the beginning of the second century, there is also evidence of morning gatherings, probably held on the same day but also more often (see esp. Pliny, *Ep*. 10.96.7; cf. Alikin 2010: 79–102). At least some of these gatherings, however, did not involve eating. All in all, we should assume that the majority of Christian communal meals at this stage still took place in the evening and took the form of a dinner.

Where did the early Christians celebrate these communal meals? In earlier scholarship, the widespread assumption was that Christians of the first two centuries met almost exclusively in houses owned by wealthier members of the community (for an overview, see Adams 2013: 1–5). Following that assumption, the meal, for instance, of Paul's Corinthians has been modelled as taking place in the triclinium and atrium of a Corinthian villa (Murphy-O'Connor 2002 [1983]: 153–61). More recently, however, it has been argued that it is also possible to imagine a completely different scenario, locating the participants, for example, in the upper-story room of a workshop (Horrell 2004). This alternative view draws on an analogy with several meals reported in the New Testament, explicitly accommodated in an upper-room space (Mark 14:15; Luke 22:12; Acts 20:9). There is also some evidence that during the first several centuries Christians used a number of other spaces (for a comprehensive overview of the available evidence, see Adams 2013: Chapters 6–8). For instance, bearing in mind the New Testament stories of the feeding of the multitude, we should not exclude the possibility that some meals took place outdoors.

Relying on these pieces of evidence, recent research has challenged the household church scenario of Christian origins as unfounded; it has even been suggested that the term 'household church' should be dropped from scholarly usage as a misleading category (Adams 2013: 202). If this view is justified, it has important implications for our understanding of early Christian meals. If we were to see a snapshot of the life of a first- or second-century Christian community, we should not be surprised to see it gathered

around a meal in a rented room in an inn or tavern, in a barn outside the city walls, next to a tomb in a cemetery, or at a picnic on a river bank.

Realizing the wide variety of options for spaces to be occupied by early Christians for their communal meals, we have to ask how representative the ideal model of the Graeco-Roman banquet is of early Christian meals. This is an important issue, in that viewing early Christian meals through the prism of the Graeco-Roman banqueting tradition is considered one of the most important achievements of contemporary scholarship (see Taussig 2012, for an overview of the work of the SBL Seminar *Meals in the Greco-Roman World*).

What, then, are the shared characteristics of early Christian meals and the Graeco-Roman banqueting tradition? First, it is worth mentioning that a majority, if not all, of the New Testament passages concerned with meals imply reclining as the dining posture: the verbs used are *anapiptō* (Mark 8:6, Matt. 15:35, Luke 22:14, John 6:10), *anaklinō* (Mark 6:39, Matt. 14:19), *anakeimai* (Mark 14:18, Matt. 26:20) and *kataklinō* (Luke 9:15, 24:30). It thus seems that reclining was seen at least as an ideal way of dining. Further, reading books aloud, the joint singing of hymns, and listening to sermons—a programme accompanying Christian meals since a very early phase—also greatly resembles the banquet model, as the type of activities we would expect to find occurring during a symposium (König 2012). Finally, the ritualized Christian procedures concerning bread and wine—i.e. the thanksgiving or blessing prayers—are practices of a kind we would expect to observe during a traditional banquet. They reveal substantial similarity to the practice of libation, whereby a presider opens the symposium part of the banquet by pouring out some wine in the name of a patron deity (see e.g. Diodorus of Sicily, *Bibliotheca historica* 4.3).

On the other hand, we have to ask whether reclining was a universal posture at early Christian meals (cf. 1 Cor. 14:30), especially those occurring outside a specialized dining setting (Dunbabin 2003: 183). Over time, the differences became more evident: Christians started to use their own specialized spaces, ritual specialists started to occupy a central role, and meal gatherings ceased to be seen primarily as banquets and took on a stronger symbolic meaning. With this loss of instrumental functionality, representing a key aspect of ritualization as it is understood in this chapter, we are also witnessing the development of important cognitive functions of early Christian meals.

Cognitive Functions of Early Christian Meals

When engaging in or observing a behaviour characterized by a high degree of ritualization, one is also able to understand that it may be determined by other than instrumental goals (Kapitány and Nielsen 2015). As humans, we are sometimes prone to believe that the behaviour is being conducted in such a strange manner because it is aiming at a

supernatural outcome. The formation of these kinds of beliefs, which may be unconscious, has been widely studied under such diverse umbrellas as ritual efficacy, magical thinking, or superstition (Vyse 2013). Despite their negative connotations in modern Western culture, the latter two phenomena have in fact probably had a number of evolutionarily positive outcomes for humans (Markle 2010).

The bread and wine consumed by the earliest Christian communities were of course not believed to be filled with or bearing sacredness to the same extent they were perceived as such from the third century onward (cf. e.g. Cyprian, *Ep*. 57.2). However, already Paul considered implications for those who might consume the blessed bread and wine in an unworthy manner (*anaxiōs*), accusing them of being guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord (11:27; cf. 11:26). They should recognize that the food and drink is the 'body'; otherwise they are eating and drinking a judgement upon themselves (11:29).

The Lord's Supper in Paul undoubtedly suggests an event of special significance. For Paul, consuming the bread and cup in the right manner probably served primarily as a metonymy for the morally appropriate behaviour of the participants throughout the gathering. Nevertheless, read literally, Paul's words could easily be taken as referring to the bread and cup themselves. Thus the bread and wine could come to be seen as possessing a special quality. One consequence of this view is that the ingesting of such bread and wine could eventually be interpreted as a means of acquiring the special quality previously dwelling in the food. Although not fully-fledged in Paul, we should not overlook the fact that Paul's words open the door to this interpretation, and that the consumed bread and wine could thus fulfil important psychological functions for those who understood their meals in this way.

From the perspective of ritual theory, the belief that the bread and wine as such possess a special quality presupposes that they acquired this quality through earlier ritual procedures of being prayed over. Recent research concerned with the intuitive human evaluation of ritual efficacy has revealed that people are more prone to believe that a ritual is effective (i.e. the bread and wine possess a special quality) when it is more ritualized and when it involves a ritual specialist in certain roles (Barrett and Lawson 2001; Legare and Souza 2012).

On the basis of information discussed above concerning the role and the form of prayer over the meal elements at Corinthian meal gatherings, it is reasonable to assume that they were ritualized only to a very limited extent. In Ignatius, however, we met an author strongly insisting on the central role of the bishop in local churches. If Ignatius's addressees took him seriously and conducted their meal gatherings as he expected, we can assume they also considered the elements of the meal to be empowered by a special quality (*Eph*. 5.2) and could perceive them even as the 'medicine of immortality' (*Eph*. 20).

Justin makes a different point. In his case, for the first time, it makes sense to use the term 'consecration' and to distinguish between what *effects it* (i.e. the prayer) and what *it effects* (i.e. it 'eucharistizes' the meal elements, which can now produce some kind of transformation of those consuming them) (cf. Buchanan 2007a: 24, 27). While for

Ignatius what primarily guaranteed the success of the ritual was episcopal authority, in the case of Justin, it is the ritual significance of remembering (*anamnesis*) the death of Jesus, as he has become body and blood, which have been given for us (*Dial.* 70.4; *1 Apol.* 66.2; cf. *Dial.* 117). As a result of this act of remembrance, the participants can now partake of the 'eucharistized' bread, wine, and water (*apo tou eucharistēthentos artou kai oinou kai hydatos; 1 Apol.* 65.5).

We can only speculate as to the precise content of the Eucharistic prayers, which probably did not include the words of institution (Buchanan 2007a: 236) and to which Justin refers as being improvised (*1 Apol.* 67.5, see above). This is a significant difference from the Didache discussed above. Similarly to Justin (*1 Apol.* 66.1), the Didache is explicit in restricting the consumption of the Eucharist to those who have been baptized. As a reason for this restriction, the author refers to a saying ascribed to the Lord: 'Do not give the holy (*to hagion*) to dogs' (Did. 9:5). We do not have conclusive evidence to decide whether what we are dealing with here is primarily a social norm, signifying group exclusivism, or a belief in the Eucharist as equipped with a special quality. While the historical context may support the first option (see Sandt 2015), drawing on the theoretical framework elaborated above, we should not exclude the second. Since the rigidity of the prayers counts among those aspects of ritualization which intuitively contribute to a ritual being evaluated as more effective, the blessing of the bread and wine by a fixed (rather than improvised) prayer can easily come to be perceived as the prayer somehow altering the elements.

The Eucharistic theology advanced by the author of the Didache suffers from a serious disadvantage, however. Contrary to the rest of the sources discussed here, the meal elements are not related to, compared to or identified with the body and blood of Jesus. With this connection absent, a Christian community otherwise impressed by the Eucharistic ritual prescribed in the Didache could lack the conceptual basis to grasp the holiness ascribed to the meal elements. The analogy between the bread and the church (Did. 9:4) sounds like a good metaphor, but in a moral rather than ritual context, including the eating of it. In the context of food ingestion, linking the bread and wine with the central cultic supernatural figure (i.e. Jesus' body and blood) seems to be a much more promising rhetorical strategy, whether this link was intended to be purely metaphorical or an expression of identification.

Conclusion

To return to the analogy of the flight over Africa that opened this chapter, we now find that with the support of relevant theorizing we are able to find in the documents informing us about early Christian ritual meals much more than occasional glimpses through the clouds. Equipped with external knowledge anchored in contemporary behavioural, cognitive, and social science, we can identify certain developmental trajectories; these in turn allow us to build models and formulate hypotheses, which can at

least partly guide our expectations as to what was likely to take place at certain times and places and what was not.

With the theoretical paradigm adopted in this chapter, we have been able to trace in our earliest sources a number of ritual innovations in the development of early Christian ritual meal practices: (1) the first hints of giving thanks over the meal elements being intimately tied to breaking of the bread, as evidenced in retrospective narratives about Jesus and his earliest followers throughout the New Testament; (2) the demand for a person of religious significance to preside over the ritual, a demand loudly and repeatedly articulated by Ignatius of Antioch; (3) the understanding of the ritual as a transformative process anchored in the act of Jesus, as first elaborated by Justin Martyr; and (4) the rigidity of the prayers to be recited over the meal elements, as prescribed in the Didache. The implementation of these innovations in the life of individual communities, followed by a deeper elaboration of some of them, was complemented by the gradual ritualization of space and time and of the programme of the gatherings as a whole. Finally, the declining role of the food as such was accompanied or even counterbalanced by the growing interest in its religious significance.

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CHAPTER 24

RITUALS OF REINTEGRATION

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Introduction

In early Christianity, conflict resolution that involved decisions about exclusion and reintegration of community members was often ritualized as excommunication, penance, confession of sins, and intercession. Mediation of divine forgiveness of sin was central to the rituals that reintegrated transgressing community members and reconciled them with the community. How did these early Christians experience the ritual forgiveness of sins? How could the shame of penance and confession function in a reintegrative manner? How did confession function as costly signalling of commitment? In what way did confession and intercession function to maintain social identity?

Several excellent histories of the emergence of penance in the first centuries of Christianity have already been written (Favazza 1988; Goldhahn-Müller 1989; Fitzgerald 2008). The present discussion, in contrast, progresses thematically and discusses different types of ritualized reintegration, exemplified in important early Christian texts (first to third centuries).

The Experience of Ritual Forgiveness of Sins

In early Christianity, immoral behaviour was conceived of as sin, which was a danger to both the individual and the community. Reintegration to the church was understood as removal of sin. Therefore, our study of ritualized reintegration begins with an appreciation of the experienced danger of sin and the experienced ritual efficacy of intercession for forgiveness in early Christianity.

The Danger of Sin

With the aid of conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; 1999), recent scholarship on the Jewish and Christian concept of sin has demonstrated that sin was not just an abstract moral concept but rather spoken of as something quite tangible. Gary Anderson (2009), discussing both Judaism and Christianity, shows that in pre-exilic times sin was typically talked about as a substance, either a burden or a stain, that needed to be removed from the sinner (e.g. Gen. 4:13; Ps. 51:4). After the Babylonian exile, a second and complementary conceptualization of sin emerged: sin as debt that needs to be forgiven and compensated for through good deeds or suffering (e.g. Isa. 40:2; Sir. 3:3). Joseph Lam (2016) refines Anderson's analysis of the Hebrew Bible and suggests four conceptualizations of sin: sin as burden, accounting, path (e.g. Ps. 119:101), and stain. To be complete, we should add Paul's innovative conceptualization of sin as an agent, a slave-owner, in Romans 5–8.

In all these conceptualizations, sin is something dangerous that destroys the sinner's life and relationship to God. The burden of sin wears the sinner down and causes sickness; the stain of sin makes the sinner morally impure and thus abominable to God; the account of sin and good deeds makes the sinner liable to *the* accountant and judge, that is, God; the path of sin leads the sinner astray; and the slave-owner Sin is an irresistible commanding force who makes the sinner break God's law, which ultimately leads to death. The effect of sin is therefore experienced as dangerous, not just because it threatens interpersonal relationships, but also because it threatens one's life and standing before God.

The Ritual Removal of Sin

A number of New Testament texts give us glimpses of early Christian rituals that effect forgiveness of sins through intercession for sinners in the Christian community.[1] The Epistle of James, for example, portrays sin as a destructive force that gives birth to death (1:15; cf. 5:20), a measure that can be forgiven (5:15) and a substance that can be covered (5:20). James promises that communal prayers by the elders accompanied by anointment and laying on of hands can effect both forgiveness and healing, since righteous prayers are 'powerful' and 'effective' (5:14–15). Sin is thus parallel to sickness in the sense that it is a destructive force that threatens life but can be removed by prayer, anointing, and laying on of hands on the sinner. The claim is backed with the example of Elijah (5:16–17), which suggests that the author imagines the power of God to work through the prayers of the intercessors to take away the danger of sin.

[1] The extent to which baptism and the Eucharist were imagined to effect forgiveness is not dealt with in this chapter.

According to the ritual form hypothesis (McCauley and Lawson 2002), the human mind structures its perception of religious ritual action in the same manner it structures ordinary actions, with the addition that divine agency somehow acts through the ritual action. Our cognitive schema for an ordinary action is that (1) an agent performs an (2) action (with an instrument) (3) on a patient. In religious rituals God acts through one of these slots. God acts either through either (1) the ritual agent (e.g. the priest), (2) the ritual action and medium (e.g. words, gestures, or props), or even (3) directly on the ritual patient (e.g. the penitent or the baptizand) to effect change of religious significance. Rituals of forgiveness of sins are perceived as rituals in which God somehow works through the ritual actions to take away the sin from the sinner. In the Epistle of James, the divine agency works through the intercessors (the ritual agents) and the laying on of hands and the anointments (the ritual instruments) to effect the removal of sin in the confessor (ritual patient). Similar practices are evident in the Matthean (Matt. 18:15–20) and the Johannine (John 20:22–3; 1 John 1:8–2:2; 5:14–18) traditions (Roitto 2012; 2014).

From the third century and onwards several texts deal with penance and intercessory prayers for sinners in greater depth (Favazza 1988: Chapters 3–4). The urgent sense of sin as danger is even more apparent in many of these texts. When Tertullian wishes to convince his audience how important it is to do penance for post-baptismal sin in his treatise *On Repentance*, he talks about sin as a debt that must be repaid to avoid death (Chapters 2, 3), a shipwreck from which the only salvation is the plank of penance (Chapters 4, 7), an offence to God that makes the sinner displeasing in God's eyes (Chapter 5), a shameful and lethal venereal disease (Chapter 10), etc. To remedy this state, the sinner must first do penance to honour God. Tertullian's imagination of an offended God that must be appeased fits well into David Konstan's (2010) analysis of ancient conflict resolution, where the most important part of moral repair was to restore the dignity of the offended party. In cases where the offender is clearly subordinate to the offended, this was best done by displays of submissiveness and shame (2010: 22–6, 59). As Tertullian imagines sin, the subordinate human had offended the superior God. Rough clothing, fasting, and weeping, as prescribed by Tertullian in *On Repentance*, ritualizes the acknowledgement of one's guilt and the appeasement of God (Chapters 9, 11). The penance ritual is concluded by public confession of sins (*exomologesis*), kneeling before the community (Chapter 9), and the laying on of hands by the clergy (cf. *Pud*. 7). This ritual finalizes the process that relieves the sinner from the danger of sin. The community represents Christ's agency (*Paen*. 10) and therefore the ritual 'exalts' (*relevat*), 'cleanses' (*mundatum reddit*), 'excuses' (*excusat*) and 'absolves' (*absolvit*) the penitent from sin (Chapter 9).

Cyprian's argument in his treatise *On the Lapsed* is basically very similar to Tertullian's: it is dangerous to avoid penance and confession of sins, since it will lead to damnation. Cyprian conveys an even more acute sense of danger when he reiterates colourful example stories about unrepentant sinners who were tormented and killed by demons, made dumb, vomited after partaking in the Eucharist, and so on (Chapters 24–6). Only sincere penance can remedy the dire state you are in.

To sum up the argument of this section, sin was perceived as a concrete danger by the first Christians and the rituals of penance, confession, and intercession were experienced as its remedy. In terms of ritual theory, specifically Jens Schjødt's (1986) classification of rituals, we can classify these rituals as crisis rituals, that is, rituals that take the ritual patient from a negative to a normalized state. Crisis rituals can be contrasted with rites of passage, which take the patient from one neutral status to another within the community, and rites of initiation, which transform the patient from an outsider to an insider. The sinner was neither an acceptable community member, nor an outsider, but a deviant in danger who needed to be restored.

The Costliness of Post-Baptismal Forgiveness

Why did the early church not just forgive the sins of post-baptismal sinners without discrimination? Given our discussion in the previous section about sin as life-threatening danger, it would seem uncontroversial for the church to use its authority to redeem everyone without limitation in order to save them. From an emic theological perspective, restrictions on forgiveness were explained with images like that of Tertullian's anthropomorphic God who is angered by sin and will not forgive until he has been appeased by sincere remorse. Thus, rituals of forgiveness could never be a mechanical way to bypass God's indignation over immorality. Just like interpersonal apologies are experienced as more sincere if they are accompanied by costly gestures (Ohtsubo and Watanabe 2008), so was God experienced as more pleased by thorough penance practices. From an etic perspective, though, explanations based on God's anthropomorphic character traits are insufficient. We also need to discuss the social effects of costly reconciliatory rituals in early Christian communities.

Game Theory and the Limits of Post-Baptismal Forgiveness

Reconciliation is the beginning of renewed cooperation, and cooperation is one of humanity's most fundamental dilemmas. Should I cooperate only with fully reliable partners or should I accept cooperation with even the nastiest cheats who will probably take advantage of me at every opportunity? Or should I try to find a strategy somewhere in between? What is the most optimal strategy? Game theory is a theoretical discipline that analyses problems of cooperation and competition between social agents with the aid of mathematical models and computer simulations of agents. One of the pioneers of the field, Robert Axelrod (1984; 1997), made several computer simulations of social agents that need to cooperate repeatedly to gain resources and thus be able to reproduce.

The artificial agents in these simulations are simple-minded compared to humans, but nevertheless employ basic strategies to decide whether they should continue to cooperate with other agents in the next round or not. In these simulations, an agent can receive extra resources by defecting from cooperation and taking advantage of a cooperative agent, but if both agents defect in the same round, both end up with nothing at all. In several versions of Axelrod's simulations, agents can cooperate, be 'nasty' (defect to gain an advantage) or 'take revenge' (defect as soon as the other agent has defected). Cooperative agents can also 'forgive' defectors, which means that the agent continues to cooperate in the next round even if the other agent defects. Axelrod was able to show that limited forgiveness (continue to cooperate with a defector once or twice before you take revenge) is a more successful strategy than nastiness (always defect), tit-for-tat (take revenge immediately), and relentless forgiveness (always cooperate) under many circumstances, especially in circumstances where the simulated agents are programmed to make 'mistakes' (defect when their strategy says cooperate and vice versa) at random intervals. If an agent never forgives even the smallest slight, that agent will end up losing valuable partners who made mistakes, but if the agent forgives unceasingly, the agent will end up robbed of all resources, exploited by nasty agents. To forgive defectors one or two times but not more than that was an optimal middle road to avoid losing cooperative partners who make occasional mistakes, and yet protect oneself from habitual defectors.

Research involving simulations of social behaviour has proliferated, resulting in innumerable tests of various cooperation scenarios. For our purposes, however, the original simulations by Axelrod are enough to demonstrate that every individual and every group have to make calculated decisions on a daily basis about whom to cooperate with. We humans are intuitive game theoreticians (some more skilled than others) who consciously or subconsciously weigh the costs and benefits of cooperating or not cooperating with people around us. Psychologists and biologists argue that the emotional set-up to balance forgiveness and revenge is innate in both humans and other social species (McCullough 2008). We may therefore assume that the first Christian groups were just like us in this sense.

The problem of forgiveness is evident already in the tension between different sayings of Jesus on the subject. Several sayings radically demand unlimited forgiveness, reconciliation, and non-retaliation (Mark 11:25; Matt. 5:38–48; 6:9, 14–15; 18:21–35; Luke 6:29–36; 11:4), while other sayings limit the duty to forgive offenders to those who 'repent' or 'listen' (Luke 17:3–4; Matt. 18:15–22). The latter sayings deal with forgiveness of 'brothers' meant to function as intra-group ethics for Christian communities, which might explain why the ethics of forgiveness is conditional in these sayings. We may imagine that early Christian communities, just like any community, made the intuitive strategic judgement call that they had to limit forgiveness of repeat offenders in their community.

If early Christian communities worked anything like most social groups, most interpersonal conflicts were probably solved in a non-ritualized manner. In Paul's letter we find all kinds of conflicts, such as interpersonal conflicts (e.g. Phil. 4:2–3), factions inside the communities (e.g. 1 Cor. 1–4), and conflicts between different branches of the

Church (Galatians). In none of these cases does Paul call for ritualized protocols for conflict resolution. On one occasion, however, we see a glimpse of ritualization of conflict resolution (DeMaris 2008: 79–90): Paul argues that they should 'hand' a sexual offender 'over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh' (1 Cor. 5:5), which is probably a curse formula (Smith 2009). (The *anathema* curses pronounced by Paul, Gal. 1:8–9; 1 Cor. 16:22, are not directed at individuals but rather against anyone who holds certain opinions and can therefore not be seen as rituals of exclusion.)

The sexual offender is the only known case where Paul suggests exclusion or marginalization (we do not know which, but Paul specifies that they should not eat together, 1. Cor. 5:11) of a community member, and it is in this particular case where we see some degree of ritualization of the conflict resolution. To hand the sinner over to Satan is a way to ritualize the individual's change of status. According Roy Rappaport (1999: e.g. 89–97), rituals function to make the new status of individuals an unambiguous social fact. Throughout the early history of the church, conflicts involving decisions about exclusion and reintegration are more ritualized than other conflicts (more on this below).

Why would Paul exclude this particular member, when he seems to think that the whole Corinthian community is full of sinful behaviour? His argument is that this particular sin is like 'leaven' (1 Cor. 5:6–10) that will destroy the whole community, and thus he frames the problem in terms of the purity of the church (DeMaris 2008: 79–90). The imagery suggests that Paul has made an intuitive game theoretical calculus and come to the conclusion that this particular individual's defection from group norms is going to have particularly contagious consequences for the moral purity of the whole community. In other words, Paul seems worried about the integrity of the social identity of the community if they allow the moral transgressor to participate in their meals. Whether Paul is strategically correct in his decision is not our issue here. For our discussion, the important point is that Paul's theological reasoning embeds intuitive strategic judgement calls.

Matthew 18:15–20 contains the New Testament's most developed script for conflict resolution. Yet it is somewhat unrealistic in the sense that it assumes one sinner and one victim, and it assumes that the victim has the courage to confront the abuser, which is rarely the case in real-life conflicts. The Matthean Jesus prescribes a three-step procedure to put increasing pressure on the offender to 'listen', and if he does not listen he is to be excluded or marginalized (vv. 15–17). The three verses that follow (vv. 18–20) seem to reflect a ritual pronouncement in the community where the sinner is either 'bound' or 'loosened' depending on whether he listens (Roitto 2014). The whole procedure is geared towards exclusion as a very last resort, and the emphasis in Chapter 18 lies on forgiveness and attempts to reform the offender. The Matthean script of conflict resolution embeds the game-theoretical insight that it is often a good idea to continue to cooperate with occasional offenders, but that one should stop cooperating with those who do not recognize their offence as morally wrong, since they will likely repeat their offence.

To what extent the Christian community should continue to tolerate repeated offenders is at the core of the debate in the following centuries about whether one should allow forgiveness of grave sins after baptism. In the East, unlimited forgiveness of repeated

offences as long as the sinner repented was the norm, but in Rome and Northern Africa, a debate on this issue raged in the second and third centuries (Favazza 1988: Chapters 2–4). The Shepherd of Hermas is the first Christian author to suggest one more—but only one—chance to be forgiven after baptism (Vis. 2.2.4–5; Mand. 4.1.8; 4.3.6).

Tertullian, known for his rigorist bent, also argues for limiting the post-baptismal penance to one occasion in *On Repentance* (Chapter 7), written before he joined the Montanists. Later in life, after becoming a Montanist, he argues in *On Modesty* that certain sins, especially adultery, can never be forgiven. He makes a distinction between sins 'unto death', which cannot be forgiven, and less grave sins 'not unto death', which can be forgiven repeatedly (Chapter 2). With this new distinction, he abandons the category of sins that can be forgiven once. He does so in debate with an unnamed bishop, who apparently has decreed that all adulterers will be forgiven if they repent (Chapter 1). To Tertullian, this is to destroy any incitement to stop sinning, since the sinner knows in advance that his sin will not endanger his salvation. The lenient attitude of the bishop will only increase sin in the church, Tertullian argues (Chapter 1).

Tertullian and Hermas could be said to formulate game strategies when they formulate rules for how many times and how gravely people may sin before they are no longer allowed to be part of the community. The rule of one second penance is similar to the strategy 'forgiving tit-for-tat', which proved to be quite successful in Axelrod's simulations. This strategy forgives cooperation partners once in order not to terminate cooperation too fast, but after that, one should deny cooperation to avoid further damage. Since Hermas is motivated by a sense of eschatological urgency, this solution might seem game-theoretically sound. One more chance should be enough if the final judgement is around the corner. However, history proved Hermas wrong in his eschatological expectation, which made the rule of only one second penance quite impractical since it was too inflexible to cover the complexities of long-term collaboration. In Northern Africa and Rome, there was intense debate in the third century between rigorists, laxists, and those in between about how generously the Church should forgive post-baptismal sinners (Dallen 1986: Chapter 2; Favazza 1988: Chapter 4). The debate climaxed in the aftermath of the Decian persecution. After much strife, the bishops in Northern Africa accepted Cyprian's policy in *On the Lapsed* to reconcile everyone who made proper penance, but those who had actually sacrificed to idols had to make lifelong penance. However, just two years later, 252 CE, it was decided that even those who had sacrificed should be fully reconciled with the church (Dallen 1986: 38–9).

The history of regulating excommunication, penance, and reconciliation in the early church is thus the history of trying to formulate what we from an etic, game-theoretical, perspective can describe as a functional balance between exclusion and inclusion that could maintain the integrity of the church. Determining the appropriate balance depends on what kind of church you wish to uphold, and had we moved later in history, we would have seen that the experimentation on rules for church discipline is a never-ending struggle (Dallen 1986). Rigorists like Tertullian envisioned a holy community of highly committed and moral members. Cyprian's vision for the church was obviously more tolerant of shortcomings. Different understandings of the identity of the church

obviously led to different intuitions about a good balance between reintegration and permanent exclusion. From the perspective of cultural epidemiology (Sperber 1996), congregations that practised the policy to reintegrate all who were willing to do penance were probably capable of creating more vital communities than both rigorists and laxists in the long run. The rigorist's policy probably excluded too many members and thus was not capable of dispersing effectively in the population of the Roman Empire. At first glance, one might think that a laxist policy would have had the best potential to spread across a population, since it is the most inclusive policy. However, as we will develop further in the sections below with the help of costly signalling theory, the laxist position probably made the identity of the church less distinct and inspired lower degrees of commitment to the extent that laxist congregations were not as stable as those churches that required penance.

Penance and Public Confession of Sins as Costly Signalling

In recent debates about the evolutionary roots of religion, one of the most fundamental research debates is whether religion is best explained as the by-product of functional cognition or as an adaptation that enhances cooperation. Proponents of the adaptationist theory have suggested that religious rituals can function as costly signals of commitment (Irons 1996; 2001; Sosis 2003; 2004; 2006). A commitment signal is an action—often a ritual action—to prove one's commitment to the community. The action must be difficult to fake and so costly that it is only worthwhile if you are committed to the group. Less committed persons would find the cost of such a ritual too high to participate. In early Christianity, baptism gradually developed into a costly signal of commitment as the catechumenate became longer and more demanding and as the baptismal ritual became more elaborate (cf. Johnson 2007). Only a fairly committed person would make the effort to go through all the stages necessary to become a full member of the church in the third and fourth centuries.

Nevertheless, even church members who were committed enough at the time of baptism were perhaps not always motivated to abide by the norms of the Christian community. How was one to determine whether such a member should remain in the community? I suggest that public confession of sins and penance functioned as a costly signal of commitment in the early Church.

The Shame of Public Confession as a Costly Signal

The cost of a ritual can be quite material, such as sacrifice of animals or mutilation of the body. But the cost can also be immaterial, such as time, risking social status, giving up social relations, or emotional stress. I suggest here that risking shame was the cost of public confession of sins.

Irenaeus (*Haer*. I.13.7) mentions that some are ashamed to confess their sins and therefore apostatize. Shame is also recognized by Tertullian as the main obstacle to overcome in his discussion in *On Repentance*. He realizes that some hesitate to confess their sins because they 'anticipate shame' (Chapter 10), but he argues that the shame is worth it, because salvation is at stake.

Psychologists describe shame as an emotion that makes you feel unworthy in the face of others, as opposed to the feeling of guilt, which makes you feel negatively about certain acts you have committed (e.g. Tangney 2002; Tangney and Dearing 2002). Anthropologists, on the other hand, often talk about shame as the opposite of honour. Whereas honour is positive social capital, shame is negative social capital (e.g. Peristiany 1966; Gilmore 1987; Rohrbaugh 2010). There is, of course, a connection between the emotional and social aspect, since social shame often causes the emotional state of shame. Carlin Barton argues that ancient Roman discourse on shame distinguished between the sense of shame, that is, an inner sensitivity to what is shameful, and actual shame, that is, losing honour in the face of others. Displaying the emotion shame could sometimes lessen the social shame, since the display demonstrated a sense of shame (Barton 2001: 197–296).

From an evolutionary perspective, the emotion shame increases fitness by inhibiting certain behaviours that would potentially disqualify us from the goods that having cooperative partners brings (Gilbert 2003; cf. Jaffe 2008). Like all emotions, shame is sometimes a crude instrument that can misfire or become pathological. Evolutionary psychologists recognize this, but argue that shame on average guides social behaviour in directions that increase fitness. The capacity to anticipate what will cause shame is as important as the actual experience of shame, since our anticipation inhibits our behaviour before we have done something anti-social (Greenwald and Harder 1998).

Shame can induce several different courses of action (Greenwald and Harder 1998; Tangney and Dearing 2002; Gilbert 2003). When someone feels shame for breaking social norms, it often induces an impulse to repair relations by showing submissiveness. However, shame can also provoke an impulse to hide from the shaming gaze of the group. Shame can therefore both induce pro-social and anti-social behaviour. (Another domain of shame is related to competition for social status. When you have been shamed and denigrated in a contest for social honour, the most typical reactions are mortification, anger, desire for revenge, and longing to regain your honour. However, that is not our focus here.)

Societies often use processes of shaming to rear their members and direct behaviour. Criminologist John Braithwaite (1989) helpfully distinguishes between stigmatizing and reintegrative shaming. When shaming is stigmatizing, the processes push the offender out of societal acceptance so that the offender distances himself from the group. When shaming is reintegrative, it is coupled with love and hope of forgiveness. The offender is put to shame, but also welcomed back to the group and accepted anew as soon as the offender shows willingness to reform and atone for his/her crime. Reintegrative shaming as a strategy to reform offenders only works if the offender values his/her belonging to the shaming community. The period of shaming must be limited and the intensity of the

shame must not be too overwhelming, Braithwaite argues. Forceful shaming strategies often result in stigmatization.

Given the nature of shame, public confession of sins was probably an effective commitment signal. A good costly signal should deter the uncommitted more than the committed, and shame can function to either alienate or to reintegrate community members. Tertullian is well aware that the emotional and social shame of public confession is experienced as such a high cost that some hesitate to confess in spite of its leading to eternal life. Therefore, Tertullian comforts those who hesitate to confess that they will be met by loving care by the community, since the other community members are so socially close that they could not possibly take advantage of the precarious situation of the confessor:

> If ever the danger to shame is serious, this is certainly the case when it stands in the presence of insult and mockery, when one man is exalted through another's ruin, when one ascends over another who is laid low. But among brethren and fellow-servants, where there is one hope, fear, joy, sorrow, suffering, because there is one Spirit from one Lord and Father, why do you think these men are any[thing] different from yourself (*hos aliud quam te opinaris*)? Why do you flee, as of scoffers, those who share your misfortunes? The body cannot rejoice at the suffering of a single of its members; the whole body must needs suffer along with it and help in its cure. (*Paen.* 10, trans. Le Saint 1959; cf. *Pud.* 3)

Tertullian's scene is an excellent example of what Braithwaite calls 'reintegrative shaming'. The confessor can feel the care from the community as he confesses and becomes reintegrated into the community again. To those strongly committed, the shaming ritual of confession was probably experienced as limited suffering worth enduring to be reconciled with the community and removed from one's former status as sinner.

A less committed member, however, might have felt less confidence in the loving goodness of the 'brothers' and reckoned the value of reintegration lower—the risks of his confession being used against him as costlier than the benefit of being allowed to return to the community—even if one believed in Christ as one's saviour.

As discussed above, shame can both give the impulse to reconcile through submissive displays and the impulse to withdraw, depending on how important the relation is. Therefore, confession functioned as a costly signal that deterred the less committed but reintegrated the committed. The cost-benefit analysis of the individual contemplating whether to confess or not would have led to different estimates depending on the degree of commitment. By exploiting the human action impulses associated with shame, penance effectively induced different choices, depending on commitment.

In the first- and second-century texts that talk about reproof, confession, and intercession, there is no explicit mention of a period of ascetic penance preceding the public confession. However, in the third century, several texts give witness to how the church developed different kinds of ascetic penance practices. Tertullian is a vivid witness to

a practice in which the penitent goes through a period of simple clothing and food accompanied by prayers and tears (*Paen.* 9–11). Tertullian has often been interpreted as a legalist who thinks one can compensate for sins by penitential merits. Gösta Hallonsten (1982) has argued, however, that Tertullian's language should not be mistaken for legalism. Rather than legal satisfaction, Tertullian demands gestures of good will towards God. In the analytical language of costly signalling theory, Tertullian compels Christians to send a costly signal of commitment to God and to the community.

The severity of Tertullian's prescriptions brings us to the problem of balanced costly signalling. According to costly signalling theory, it is not the case that a more costly ritual practice always is better. On the contrary, overly costly rituals will repel even committed community members. A functional costly signalling ritual should not be so costly that it deters more cooperation partners than necessary (Sosis 2003). Apparently the unnamed bishop whom Tertullian opposes in *On Modesty* as well as many others in Tertullian's church made different judgement calls as to how severe and restricted penance should be. A few decades later, after the Decian persecution, rigorists called for severe penance and even permanent exclusion of the lapsed while the laxists allowed anyone who repented to return without penance. Cyprian argued for a middle road (see discussion above). This shows how difficult it was to steer penance in a direction that, on the one hand, was costly enough to deter less committed opportunists, but, on the other hand, not so severe that it repelled highly committed believers.

Matthew 18:15–20 appears to be an early attempt at softening the amount of shame involved in reproof of sinners (Roitto 2014). Many other instructions from the first century simply prescribe that sinners should be isolated from the Christian community if they do not listen to reproof (e.g. 1 Cor. 5:9–11; 2 Thess. 3:14; Titus 3:10; Did. 15:3), but Matthew prescribes an approach whereby the sinner should preferably be reproved by a small group and only as a last resort by the whole community. According to Braithwaite's analysis of reintegrative shaming, reintegration works best if the amount of shame is moderate and combined with care and love for the transgressor, so we may suspect that Matthew reacted against dysfunctional reproof practices in his community that pushed away people that could otherwise have been reintegrated. The church experimented a lot with the degree of publicity in the process of penance during the first six centuries, but in the seventh century the practice was radically reformed so that confession of sin was with very few exceptions a non-public ritual before a priest rather than the congregation (Rahner 1983: e.g. 216–17; McNeill and Gamer 1938: 3–75).

When the costly rituals prescribed by the leadership are experienced as too tough, community members might be inclined to find workarounds. As William Irons (2001), one of the pioneers of costly signalling theory, points out, costly rituals can usually only be upheld if the leadership can enforce them. In early Christianity, the belief that martyrs had the authority to forgive sins became popular in the third century. Asking a martyr for intercession thus became a way to bypass penance. Already Tertullian protests against this innovation (*Pud.* 22), but it is during the Decian persecution that the practice becomes most popular. Instead of going through penance, some would ask a soon-to-be martyr for a letter of indulgence to show that one's sins had been atoned

through the powerful intercession of the martyr. In practice, this belief undermined the bishop's control of the penitential process and thereby also of who was allowed back into the community. Not surprisingly, Cyprian argued against the practice of bypassing proper penance with indulgences (*Laps*. 17; *Ep*. 29, 30; cf. Dallen 1986: 37–42), even if he did not deny the efficacy of the martyrs' intercessions (*Ep*. 8; *Laps*. 36).

Public Confession and Excommunication as Identity Maintenance

Being a Christian in the early church was obviously not just a matter of belonging to a functional group that could cooperate to produce material welfare. The identity of the Christian community was that it was a community with shared beliefs, norms, and goals. Rituals of exclusion and reintegration were therefore tools for maintaining the identity of the church.

Reintegration as Identity Maintenance

Roy Rappaport (1999: 52–4) suggests that rituals elicit two kinds of information that are important for the community: self-referential information and canonical information. Self-referential information is the information that the participants of a ritual elicit about themselves by participating in the ritual. In the case of public confession of sins, the confessor sends the information that he repents his sin, accepts the values of the group, and intends to live by them from now on. The publicity of the act, where the sinner kneels and weeps and receives intercession (Tertullian, *Paen*. 9–10), makes the sinner's detachment from sin and commitment to his/her identity as a member of church a social fact. The confessor could theoretically fake sincerity, but as Rappaport (1999: 119–24) points out, the ritual makes one's commitment a social fact and an obligation that can be held against whoever does not abide by it. The ritual thus increases the social pressure for the participant to be consistent with the self-referential information she/he has given in the ritual.

Canonical information is information about the worldview of the community. Whenever a penitent confesses sins publicly, he/she simultaneously confirms the values and the worldview of the church. *Didascalia Apostolorum* 11 reasons that the confession of one community member is really beneficial for the whole community, since if the rest of the community sees a sinner participating in the communion, they might think it is acceptable to sin themselves. Cyprian argues in *On the Lapsed* that it would be a mockery of those who died for their convictions during the persecution to allow the

lapsed to return to the church without proper penance and confession of sins. He praises those who had the courage to confess their faith during the persecution. They embody the identity of the church, while the cowardice of the lapsed is contrary to all values of the church (Chapters 1–13). It is therefore contrary to the Gospel and a pollution of the church to allow the lapsed back without proper penance (Chapters 14–16). Proper penance and confession, therefore, are good for the whole church (Chapters 35–6). In both these texts, the authors are themselves aware of how penance and confession of sins publicly express the communal identity.

Exclusion as Identity Maintenance

Social psychologists frequently point out that shaming, marginalization, and exclusion of deviants can function to manifest the values for the whole group, even if the offender does not readjust. José Marques et al. call this 'the black sheep effect' (cf. Marques et al. 2001). The sectarian writings of the Qumran literature, for example, contain rules for who is allowed to participate in the holy meals and how long one should be excluded from the meals depending on which group norms one has violated (1QS with parallels in CD, e.g. 1QS VII.18–25, see Jokiranta 2007). Jutta Jokiranta (2007) has argued convincingly that these rules contributed to preserving the identity of the community. It is reasonable to assume that the excommunication practices of the early church functioned in the same way. The manner of exclusion or marginalization varied considerably in the first centuries of the church, as Joseph Favazza (1988) has shown. Some early texts advise that one should not even talk to excluded members, but as the penance system took shape, the most common practice was to bar the excommunicated member from participation in the Eucharist but still admonish the sinner to do penance. The latter is a form of marginalization rather than exclusion, with the goal of reintegrating the member. Common to both forms of excommunication is the use of negative (black sheep) labelling to mark group boundaries and thus clarify the identity of the church.

Intercession for the Forgiveness of Sins in Egalitarian and Episcopal Churches

Lastly, a brief reflection on the different functions of intercession in egalitarian and hierarchical congregations is in order. In the Gospel of Matthew and the Johannine texts, we find no hints of institutionalized and hierarchical leadership structures. On the contrary, the churches reflected in these texts seem comparatively egalitarian (Matt. 20:25–8; 23:8–12; 1 John 2:20–1, 27). In these traditions, the authority to reprove and intercede for sinners

is given to every 'brother' (Matt. 18:15–20; 1 John 5:14–17; Roitto 2012; 2014). On the other hand, James 5:14–15 appoints the authority to pray for sins and sickness to the elders, and in the third century the authority to intercede for sins is firmly limited to the bishop and the elders (e.g. Tertullian, *Paen*. 9–10; *Didascalia* 52; 64–69; Cyprian, *Laps*. 29).

It is not very realistic to imagine that there were ever groups of Christ-devotees entirely lacking leadership structures (cf. Elliott 2002). Even in groups with egalitarian ideals, there are inevitably informal leaders. Nevertheless, in a few early Christian groups, the authority to intercede for the forgiveness of sin was apparently given to all community members. 1 John hints at a community in which everybody was encouraged to confess their sins in the community on a regular basis (1 John 1:9) and each community member could intercede for sinning members (1 John 5:16; Roitto 2012). Matthew 18:15–20 seems to reflect a communal practice where all community members were authorized to reprove one another, and where small groups of community members, 'two or three', were authorized to bind or loose the sinner (Roitto 2014).

In such communities, where each member had the power to relieve each other member from sin, we can imagine that the rituals of confession and intercession had cohesive effects for the community and helped with conflict resolution. Perspective-taking, where you have to think from the perspective of whoever you are in conflict with, is a well-proven method for stimulating reconciliation between quarrelling individuals (e.g. Takaku, Weiner, and Ohbuchi 2001; Galinsky, Ku, and Wang 2005). Listening to confessions of sin and praying for the sinner made it necessary for the intercessor to take the perspective of the sinner. Mediating divine forgiveness allowed the mediator to take the perspective of God, and perhaps the imagination of a graceful God could inspire similar attitudes in the intercessor. We do not know whether the community member who was harmed by the sinner's wrongdoing was among those who interceded for the sinner, but if that was the case, the perspective-taking that the rituals stimulated would have been particularly effective for conflict resolution, since it is easier to forgive someone into whose shoes you have stepped. The scenario just painted is the product of an optimistic historical imagination, and it is equally easy to imagine how difficult it must have been to uphold such a system. Already 1 John 1:8 might suggest that some community members—understandably enough—preferred not to confess their sin publicly (cf. the discussion above on shame). The egalitarian version of reproof, confession of sins, and intercession was probably difficult to uphold in the long run.

As opposed to the egalitarian version of confession and absolution, the hierarchically supported versions of these rituals were better equipped to handle the fact that people wished to avoid the shame of exposing their moral shortcomings. As discussed above in the section on costly signalling, costly rituals are much easier to impose if there are leadership structures that can enforce them. Penance governed by an institutionalized leadership, for better or worse, was thus a more powerful tool to maintain community borders and thus to preserve the leadership's vision for the identity of the church. The hierarchically governed version of penance, in turn, probably had a strengthening effect on the legitimacy of the leaders. The role of the bishop and the elders in *Didascalia Apostolorum*, for instance, intertwines the leaders' ritual functions with their general

leadership roles. Among the bishop's duties is to judge and mediate in conflicts and decide on guilt and penance (Chapter 10). The very same bishop is also the ritual agent of the rituals of excommunication and intercession after penance (Chapter 7). If people perceived the bishop and the elders to have a unique authority to mediate forgiveness, then every performance of the ritual reinforced the perception of the leadership as sanctioned by God. This in turn, strengthened the legitimacy of the leaders to decide on resolutions to conflicts in the community.

Conclusion

Sin was experienced as a danger in early Christianity, and the identity of the church was the community of those saved from this danger and made holy through Jesus Christ. Rituals of penance and intercession were experienced as an effective remedy for the danger of post-baptismal sin. The ritualization of exclusion and reintegration also functioned to communicate status changes of individuals to the community. Those who were willing to do penance and confess their sins in the church sent a costly signal that ensured their commitment to the norms and the worldview of the church. As control over reproof, excommunication, penance, confession, and intercession was allotted to the bishop and the elders, these rituals also became important tools for communal boundary maintenance and manifestations of the identity of the church.

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CHAPTER 25

RITUAL AND HEALING

GERD THEISSEN

Introduction

Premedical healing is rooted in our evolution. Those ancestors who were influenced by charismatic healers or pre-modern rituals had a better chance of surviving and perpetuating their genes (McClenon 2002). This explains why even in our own time a hidden psychic resource of healing survives, known as the placebo effect (Brody 2010). But this placebo suggestibility is not due to genetic causes alone. The cultural environment also creates confidence by means of rituals and religious faith, which can enhance the chance of healing. Since the placebo effect does not work effectively in all cases, we have to postulate as a third factor the individual development of the personality alongside cultural and genetic factors.

Pre-modern suggestibility takes two forms, consistent with two kinds of cognitive interpretations of healing processes: that disease is caused either by a lack of positive power or by the agency of an evil power. Both situations are interpreted either as the absence of *good* spirits or the intrusion of *evil* ones. According to the folk aetiology of illness, either a life-giving power has left the sick person or that person has been invaded by an evil force. Cultural anthropology therefore differentiates between 'adorcism', in which the good spirits are restored, and 'exorcism', in which the evil spirits which had invaded the person are driven out (de Heusch 1962; Gemünden 2012). We have to deal with two dissociative states of 'possession': either by benevolent demonic forces or by evil demons. The dissociative state is interpreted in both cases as the activity of an 'external soul', i.e. an agency that is not identical with the core of the person.

The dissociative soul may be encountered in four forms (Table 25.1): (1) as the '*external soul*', which the Romans called *genius* and the Greeks *daímōn*, or (2) as a *messenger of death*, an alter ego who appears only once in order to announce the death. It may also take the form (3) of the *soul of excursion*: This soul is able to leave the body during the individual's lifetime—in ecstasy, in night-time dreams, or at times of extreme

Table 25.1 The four forms of the dissociative soul

	The domain of life	The domain of death
External localization: The soul as a divine reality	The dissociative soul as external soul, as *genius* and the protecting demon	The dissociative soul as the messenger or angel of death
Internal localization: The soul as a human reality	The dissociative soul as soul of excursion, leaving the body in dreams and ecstasy	The dissociative soul as the soul of the dead, who leaves the dead person

danger. A last form of the dissociative soul is (4) the *soul of death*, which leaves the dead body and exists as a shadow. Consequently, the external soul is connected either with life or with death, and is located either within or outside a human being.

Plato was familiar with traditional demonology, but changed the mythical frame with a new insight and message: 'No divine spirit will select you by lot, but you will be the one to choose a divine spirit … The responsibility is the chooser's; god is not to be blamed' (*Resp*. 617d–e [Emlyn-Jones and Preddy, LCL]). With Plato, personal responsibility overcomes mythical fate. The dissociative soul disappeared in the Old Testament as well, and for similar reasons. The heart is at the centre of human beings. Life should be oriented towards one external centre, according to the commandment: 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart … ' (Deut. 6:5; NRSV). The dissociative soul disappears. The laws and the prophets promote personal responsibility.

In popular belief, however, the dissociative soul (imagined as a demon) survived and reappeared in Hellenistic-Roman times. The psychic space is filled again by *demons* and *guardian angels*, as the negative and positive form of the dissociative soul. In the beginning the word *daímōn* had a positive meaning, but its semantic development led to a pejorative sense—except in philosophy, perhaps due to the Socratic *daimonion*. Middle Platonism developed a system of demonology with Apuleius of Madaura (second century CE) in his *De Deo Socratis*. It is not by chance that he was accused of being a magician, although he was subsequently acquitted of the charge.

A comparable re-mythologization occurred within early Judaism. On the one hand, nearly all Jewish demons are evil demons—they entered the world at one particular time, by the fall of the angels. Evil demons become much more active in early Judaism than in the Old Testament. They are driven out by *exorcistic rituals*. Positive power is attributed only to God. The spirit of God is a positive power, but not a person. There are few exceptions. Paul speaks in 1 Cor. 14:32 of good (prophetic) spirits as personal powers: 'And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets' (NRSV). The intrusion of such a power is the basis of *adorcistic rituals*, intended to transfer positive healing power. The distinction between exorcistic and adorcistic rituals (i.e. exorcisms and healings) is clearly documented in the Jesus tradition. Adorcistic rituals, which function

by the laying on of hands, and exorcistic ones, which operate by invoking demons, are very different. The laying on of hands and the invoking of demons may be supplemented by prayer, saliva, magical formulas (the *rhēsis barbarikē*), or special instruments. As a rule, however, we observe a minimization of ritual elements in both forms of Jesus' miracles. 'Ritual elements of healing' refers to all visible and repetitive acts whose performance is believed to have a physical impact on human beings.

The Historicity of Jesus' Healings

The historicity of Jesus' miraculous healings is disputed. After a period of scepticism, it was above all the introduction of ethnological analogies of pre-modern healers that changed our thinking on this subject. In the following, I discuss three theses which help to explain the origin of the miracle tradition. (The labels for these three approaches come from Pieter Craffert [2008].)

1. The *Messianic Propaganda Thesis*: since people expected the Messiah to perform miracles, miracles were ascribed to Jesus. Jews, however, did not expect the Messiah to perform miracles (cf. Pss. Sol. 17 and 18). During the first century CE, charismatic prophets such as John the Baptist and others did not attract miracle stories, although the Baptist was regarded as a new Elijah, and Elijah had performed miracles. In the second century CE, Bar Kochba was proclaimed to be the Messiah without miracles being ascribed to him. On the other hand, a healer like Hanina ben Dosa (first century CE) did not claim to be the Messiah. Since miracle stories are not associated with all charismatic figures, the miracle stories about Jesus may be due to his actions.
2. The *Miracle Pattern Thesis* of so-called form history is based on the fact that the miracle stories contain many recurrent motifs, such as the approaching of the sick person, his or her difficulties getting in contact with the miracle worker, specific healing manipulations, and the amazement of the crowd. The stories reflect the storyteller's skill more than historical memory.

   This form-historical scepticism, however, is not convincing if we take into account the three forms of the miracle tradition: words, stories, and summaries. In the word tradition we encounter typical features of Jesus' message. He speaks of repentance caused by miracles (Luke 10:13–15), exorcisms as a sign of the kingdom of God (Luke 11:20), and the miraculous power of faith (Luke 17:5–6). In the narrative miracle stories, Jesus never calls upon others to follow him or to repent; the eschatological message is absent (except in Matt. 8:29). The motif of faith is the only common denominator of the word and narrative traditions. The summaries of miracles speak only of healings and exorcisms, without mentioning nature-miracles such as walking on water or multiplying bread. According to a

summary in a non-Christian document, Jesus was a 'performer of miraculous deeds' (Josephus, *Ant*. 18.63–4).

We may infer from these examples that in the first century the rumour of Jesus' miracles also reached people who, like Josephus, were not his adherents. This explains the difference between the word and the narrative tradition. The *word* tradition is the tradition of Jesus' disciples, who believed in his message. In contrast, the miracle *stories* lack individual features of his message because they were also disseminated among the common people. Here Jesus was shaped according to the general patterns of miracle workers in antiquity: fantastic stories were told of him that could never have happened. In spite of this folkloric shift from history to story, however, behind these stories we find a historical core, with individual characteristics. Jesus does not heal broken legs or wounds or snake bite. Traditional societies have specialists for such 'violations' by external factors (Bichmann 1995: 61), but in the Jesus tradition we hear exclusively of two forms of healing: therapies for sickness from internal causes, and exorcisms of possession by external demons. The two forms overlap. There are sicknesses caused by demons as cases of pathogenic possession, but these can clearly be distinguished from 'executive possession' (Uro 2016: 116–17), the replacement of a human ego by a demon. Therapies fill the sick person with a magical power; exorcisms empty the possessed person of the demon by a struggle. Therapies use contagious magic, exorcism antagonistic magic. The two forms represent an opposite dynamic at work. In neither kind of healing does Jesus make use of all the means that we find among his contemporaries. He never prays, as Hanina ben Dosa did (b. Ber. 5:5 34B). He never uses material substances, as the Jewish exorcist Eleazar did (Josephus, *Ant*. 8.46–8). Since the Jesus tradition does not contain all forms of healing or all the motifs of typical miracle stories, the Jesus miracle stories are probably based on the actions of the historical Jesus. Rather than being assimilated into general patterns, his figure maintains an individual profile.

3. The *Thesis of a Late Origin* claims that since the miracles of Jesus are absent from the letters of Paul, the first writer of the oldest Gospel may have invented these miracle stories (Schmithals 1997). But early Christian letters do not mention miracles of Jesus at all. Second Peter and Ignatius know at least the Gospel of Matthew, First John knows the Gospel of John. None of these letters says anything about miracles, but all are familiar with Gospels full of miracles. Paul's silence is therefore no argument for a late origin of the miracle tradition.

Positively, we may add that the historicity of Jesus' miracles is based on their multiple attestations in independent traditions: above all in the so-called Q Source and the Gospel of Mark, but also in the special tradition of Matthew and of Luke. If, as form history suggests, all miracle stories are basically independent traditions, we have many more such sources. Besides, we encounter some features that could not

have been invented. The exorcisms provoke the question whether Jesus is acting on behalf of Satan (Mark 3:21–30). According to Mark, Jesus was unable to perform healings in his home town because of the lack of belief in him there (Mark 6:1–6). Concerning the historicity of the miracles, we can therefore say: the miracle tradition is no late invention, produced by Jewish messianic expectations or a general ancient belief in miracles. There is, however, a remarkable 'popular shift' that transformed the memory of Jesus according to general patterns of ancient beliefs in miracles. The historical Jesus was undoubtedly a healer and an exorcist (Theissen and Merz 1998: 256–84).

The Transmission of Jesus' Healing-Stories: From Paradox Healings to Counterintuitive and Symbolic Miracles

The summary of the life and activity of Jesus by Josephus speaks of 'surprising feats' (*paradoxa*) (*Ant*. 18.63–4). Of course, all miracles are paradoxical, in the sense that they contradict our everyday expectations; some of them, however, are even more counterintuitive, in that they break ontological rules. This is true above all for the nature miracles and for some therapies: Jesus walks on the sea, Lazarus has been dead for three days. A cognitive theory of memory claims minimal counterintuitiveness enhances memorability (Boyer 1994). When we retell stories, it is the counterintuitive elements that are best remembered (Barrett and Nyhof 2001). That is why there is a tendency to transform paradox events into counterintuitive irregularities. The unlikely cure of an abscess on the eye becomes healing a blind man, the healing of a sick girl becomes the revival of a dead person.

This tendency to enhance the counterintuitiveness of miracles promotes their *symbolic* significance. Jesus interpreted his exorcism as the dawn of God's kingdom (Matt. 12:28; cf. Luke 11:20). Miracle stories in the ancient world give legitimacy to power, as in the case of the miracles of Vespasian in Alexandria (Tacitus, *Hist*. 4.81; Suetonius, *Vesp*. 7). But the miracles of Jesus often have a deeper symbolic value: the healing of the blind symbolizes an inner enlightenment, the boat in the sea storm the Church, the multiplication of bread the heavenly food of revelation. In the Gospel of John all miracles are mysterious 'signs' (*sēmeía*) which reveal the divinity of Jesus. This symbolic meaning of miracles is singular in the ancient world.

On the one hand, miracles mirror the praxis of ritual healings; on the other hand, their tradition follows intrinsic literary tendencies in order to attract attention and to transfer symbolic meaning. As rituals they belong to the life world of the early Christians, as stories to their literary symbolic world.

The Ritual Factor in Jesus' Healing: Minimalizing Ritual Performances

In the Jesus tradition we find a reduction of ritual elements in both therapies and exorcisms. A comparison can illuminate this fact. Josephus writes on the exorcism of Eleazar. Although Josephus differentiates between healings and exorcisms, Solomon's wisdom embraces both: 'incantations for sickness' and 'forms of exorcisms' (*Ant*. 8.45):

> I have seen a certain Eleazar, a countryman of mine, in the presence of Vespasian, his sons, tribunes and a number of other soldiers, free men possessed by demons, and this was the manner of the cure: he put to the nose of the possessed man a ring which had under its seal one of the roots prescribed by Solomon, and then, as the man smelled it, drew out the demon though the nostrils, and, when the man at once fell down, adjured the demon never to come back into him, speaking Solomon's name and reciting the incantations which he had composed. Then, wishing to convince the bystanders and prove to them that he had this power, Eleazar placed a cup or foot basin full of water a little way off and commanded the demon, as it went out of the man, to overturn it and make known to the spectators that he had left the man. And when this was done, the understanding and wisdom of Solomon were clearly revealed. (Josephus, *Ant*. 8.46–9 [Marcus, LCL])

The means of healing are a ring and roots, certain magical formulas, and the name of the mighty king Solomon. In the stories of the Jesus tradition such ritual elements are absent, but others are present. Sometimes the public is excluded, as though Jesus were trying to hide certain magical practices (Mark 5:40; 7:33; 8:23, cf. Acts 9:40). Many healings occur by touching the sick (Mark 5:30). The imposition of hands is a form of contagious magic. We encounter saliva or a paste made of saliva and earth (Mark 7:33; 8:23; John 9:6–7). The apotropaic significance of spitting is present: when the 'chain of his tongue' is dissolved with saliva (Mark 7:35), it must be that the demons have caused a 'chained tongue'. The most important means of healing is clearly the miraculous word. Sometimes, however, it is uttered in Aramaic (as a so-called *rhēsis barbarikē*) and transmitted like a charm. This too is magic (Mark 5:41; 7:34). But no name of a great master is conjured, no prayer is said, no magic formula is cited from a powerful old book. We encounter in the Jesus tradition only a minimum of ritual gestures and elements, and these are surrounded by a magical aura. Nevertheless, they are visible and repetitive acts, whose performance is believed to have a physical impact on human beings.

The few ritual elements in the healings of Jesus are only a selection from a much larger repertoire of ritual elements, and this selection conveys a message. In Jesus' healings, ritual elements prevail that underline the personal relationship between the healer and the sick person. Taking the sick person aside focuses the healing on personal contact.

Healing words are at the centre. This contact by words is enhanced through contact by touching. The laying on of hands may confer a special status as successor. Sometimes the gesture conveys a blessing. The most intensive contact occurs by means of saliva. In antiquity, saliva is a remedy against diseases of the eyes (Herzog 1931: nos. 4, 9; Tacitus, *Hist*. 4.81). It is therefore unique that Jesus uses saliva to cure not only blind people but also a deaf man with an impediment in his speech: 'He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephatha", that is, "Be opened" ' (Mark 7:33–4; NRSV). Jesus probably grasped the deaf man's head with his hands, put his fingers in his ears and at the same time touched the deaf man's tongue with his own. This was a ritual gesture similar to a kiss—a symbol of care and love: let us recall that early Christianity was familiar with the ritual gesture of the 'holy kiss' (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; see also Penn 2005).

The relative poverty of ritual gestures in the Jesus tradition signifies an increasing proximity to the sick person by words, touching, and finally a 'kiss'. Such ritual acts correspond to the character of Jesus' healings as cures by faith, if by 'faith' we understand the personal confidence of the sick person in the healer. But this reduction of ritual elements does not mean that the magical aura disappears in favour of a personal relationship. Both aspects of the ritual elements are crucial for the healing process and its efficacy.

Healings and the Transformation of Adorcistic Magic: The Causal Attribution to 'Faith'

What is striking about Jesus is that he consciously reflects upon the efficacy of his healings. He discovers the power of faith and coins the formula: 'Your faith has saved you!' This formula is unique in antiquity, but is not without analogies. At Epidauros in Greece, for example, in the healing cult of the god Asclepius, visitors were confronted with inscriptions reporting many healings and with votive tablets of those who had been cured by the god. These inscriptions had the function of creating confidence. One of the earliest inscriptions reflects the 'faith' implicit in them, but does so in a different way than in the Jesus tradition:

> A man who could move only one finger of his hand came to the god as a supplicant, and when he saw the votive tablets in the sanctuary he did not believe in the cures and made fun of the inscriptions. In his sleep (in the sanctuary) he had a vision. It seemed to him that as he was playing dice in the room under the temple and was about to throw, the god appeared, jumped on his hand, and stretched out his [the man's] fingers. When he stepped off, he saw himself bend his hand and stretch out each finger on its own; when he had stretched them all out straight, the god asked him whether he still did not believe the votive tablets. And he said no. 'Because before you had no faith in them, though they were worthy of belief, your name in future shall be Apistos,' said the god, and when the night ended he emerged from the sanctuary cured. (Herzog 1931: no. 3; Theissen 1983: 131–2)

Faith at Epidauros means believing in the miracle stories. In the Jesus tradition, faith is not a receptive faith of this type, but an active faith which produces miracles. Jesus says that faith is able to move mountains (Mark 11:22–4). This active faith is attributed to three human roles.

First of all, it is the *faith of those who are healed*. It is the faith of the woman with the issue of blood who approached Jesus from behind in the crowd, hoping: 'If I touch his clothes, I will be made well.' Jesus said to her after she told her story: 'Daughter, your faith has saved you, go in peace, and be healed of your disease' (Mark 5:34). It is the faith of the blind Bartimaeus and the two blind men (Mark 10:52; Matt 9:29), and of the Samaritan who returned to Jesus in order to thank him (Luke 17:19). This motif corresponds to the word on faith: 'If you had faith of the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, "Be uprooted and planted in the sea," and it would obey you' (Luke 17:6). This motif is probably an authentic trace of the historical Jesus—preserved, on the one hand, in the word tradition (Luke 17:6; Mark 11:22–3), and, on the other, in many narrative stories. The motif transcends ancient analogies and can scarcely be a later Christian retrojection, since 'faith' in the Christian tradition is primarily faith in Christ, in his death and resurrection. The faith of the miracle stories is much more general. Its *point* is the causal attribution of effective healing to the faith of the healed persons. This causal attribution is not at all a matter of course. We must remember that the sick people come to Jesus expecting help. They attribute the healing power *to him*. But the healer reattributes this power *to their own faith*—contrary to their expectations.

This new reinterpretation can be explained by the theory of ritual form (Lawson and McCauley 1990; McCauley and Lawson 2002). All rituals are structured according to three roles: agent, instrument, and patient. The divine agent can be present in all roles. The people who come to Jesus hoping to be healed apply the pattern of a divine subject acting as agent. Healings, for them, are *special agent rituals*. But Jesus reattributes the healing to those who come to him, to their faith. He restructures the interpretative pattern as a *special patient ritual*: the sick person is filled with divine power. Today we know quite well that faith and confidence can support healing processes—faith on the side of both the patient and the physician. But Jesus seems to have already discovered the healing effect of faith intuitively. His 'discovery' is basically in harmony with modern research on the so-called placebo effect (Brody 2010).

In a second cluster of evidence, faith is the *faith of those who support the sick person*—a kind of vicarious faith. It is the faith of those who carry the paralyzed man to Jesus and approach him through the roof of the house; Jesus sees *their* faith, their confidence in his healing power (Mark 2:5). It is the faith of the father Jaïrus, who is told, 'Do not fear, only believe' (Mark 5:36). It is the faith of the Syrophoenician woman (Matt. 15:28) and of the father of the epileptic boy. Jesus says to him, 'All things can be done for the one who believes.' The father answers, 'I believe, help my unbelief' (Mark 9:23–4). It is also the faith of the centurion of Capernaum, who asks Jesus to heal his servant, to which Jesus replies, 'Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith' (Matt. 8:10).

The faith of these supporters has been an argument against the psychosomatic explanation of the healings. At first glance, it seems improbable that the supporters' faith could help the sick person; it is easier to imagine that the sick person's faith helps him. In two cases, the sick persons were not even present and Jesus performed the healing from a distance. In both cases non-Jewish, Gentile people were healed. This is often explained as a symbol of the 'miracle' that the Christian message spread to non-Jews.

But healing from a distance can also be explained by faith. In the 1950s a physician in Hamburg cooperated with a healer in Munich, who was a lawyer by profession (Rehder 1955). The healer was convinced that he was able to cure persons from a distance by sending messages at certain times. The physician asked him to treat three patients who were seriously ill, but did not inform the patients of this treatment. He and his patients did not notice any relief in the hours after the spiritual healer sent his message to Hamburg. After this failure, the physician informed his patients of the healer in Munich and of his extraordinary power to heal from a distance. He gave them writings of the healer and announced a spiritual treatment at a particular time. The healer himself was not informed; he knew nothing of this 'experiment'. All three patients noticed a remarkable relief after the fictitious time and hour. Their health was significantly improved, at least for a while. In order to explain the distant healings of Jesus, we must therefore presuppose only that the Syrophoenician woman told her little daughter that she was seeking help from a famous Galilean healer, and that the servant of the centurion of Capernaum had knowledge of his master's attempt to meet this healer in order to ask him for help. This may explain why the daughter and the servant felt better. We need not claim that these concrete miracles actually took place. It is enough to assume that such distant healings generally occurred, and that miracle stories were shaped according to such real experiences.

Third, we can refer to two texts in which the *lack of faith explains the failure of a healing*. When the inhabitants of Jesus' home town heard of his miracles, they were astounded. But Jesus realized that he was without honour in his home town, and the story notes: 'And he could do no deed of power there. Except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief' (Mark 6:5–6; NRSV). When the disciples failed to heal the epileptic boy, Jesus complained, 'You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you?' (Mark 9:19; NRSV). Jesus then healed the boy, but instructed his disciples: 'This kind [of demon] can come out only through prayer' (Mark 9:29: NRSV). Moreover, a unit in the word tradition also deals with the failure of an exorcism—without explaining it by a lack of faith. The logion of the returning spirit says that the state of a person is worse than the first (Matt. 12:43–5). There is no doubt that Jesus and the early Christians had to cope with failure. One explanation was a lack of faith—not only on the part of the sick person but also in his social environment. Healing charisma is the product of a healer and of expectations in a group. If Jesus' home town has no confidence in the healing power of Jesus, he cannot perform deeds there. Psychosomatic and sociosomatic healing is nearly impossible under these circumstances. The logion about the return of the demon corresponds to experience. After relief through symbolic healing, a relapse is all the more disastrous. If even the great healer fails, psychic depression must be even worse.

Exorcisms: The Eschatological Framework and the Abolition of Demons

Adorcistic healings are surrounded by an aura of contagious magic; a spiritual power is transmitted by contact. Exorcist rituals, on the contrary, are antagonistic magic. Exorcisms are a battlefield. The question is this: Who has more power, the exorcist or the demon? Even the exorcism of Eleazar (Josephus, *Ant*. 8.46–9) is a demonstration of the power of King Solomon and his superiority over the Romans. One of Jesus' exorcisms explicitly mirrors this antagonism between the Romans and the Jews: the demon calls himself 'Legion', a military term (Mark 5:1–20). Generally, however, the exorcisms are interpreted in the framework of a much greater battle, the eschatological battle between God and Satan. Exorcisms announce the destruction of Satan's power (Mark 3:22–7). All demons will disappear in the near future, when God rules in his kingdom. Exorcisms thus symbolize a change in the world. Such a symbolic interpretation of healings and miracles is unique in antiquity.

Exorcisms too are marked by a reduction of ritual elements. We sometimes find a command to fall silent (Mark 1:25). Jesus seems to suppress an escalating battle of incantations and conjurations. In Mark 5:6 we listen to the beginning of such a battle—but it starts with the capitulation of the demon. Jesus is from the outset superior. He is the victor in the exorcism: the patient is changed back once again into a 'normal' human being. Exorcisms are therefore *special agent rituals*. By the eschatological interpretation of exorcisms as the beginning of God's kingdom, this tendency is increased: exorcisms demonstrate the eschatological victory of Jesus.

The Institutionalization of Healing Rituals in Early Christianity

Jesus' healings and exorcisms do not presuppose that the sick persons belong to a well-defined group of adherents. On the contrary: they attract people who for the first time come into contact with Jesus. They have a propaganda effect for outsiders. Origen states:

> And in the case of the Christians, who have formed an association in a remarkable way, we shall see that in the beginning they were influenced more by the miracles than by exhortations to abandon the customs and practices of their fathers and adopt others totally different from these. And if we are asked for the probable reason for the beginning of the Christian community, we shall have to say that it is unlikely that the apostles of Jesus, *men from the common people and without education*, were inspired to proclaim the teaching of Christ to people by anything other than (confidence in) the power given to them and the grace which gave their words the power to account for these events. *It is equally inconceivable that their hearers would have rejected the*

> *immemorial customs and practices of their fathers unless they had been influenced by some considerable power and by the miraculous events* to accept teachings which were so strange and totally different with which they were familiar. (Origen, *Cels*. 8.47; Theissen 1983: 258–9; emphasis added)

Origen emphasizes that miracles are crucial for recruiting new Christians, especially among the uneducated. He is commenting on the beginning of Christianity. Later there must have been a change: we soon find congregations with a clear difference between ingroup and outgroup. The bridges from outgroup to ingroup are conversion and baptism. When we take into account the significance of miracles and healings for conversion, we should expect baptism to attract miraculous and healing powers.

Baptism: The Ritual of Initiation

The ritualization of healings in early Christianity is visible in the development of baptism. Baptism is from the outset an adorcistic ritual. The main function of baptism was to transfer a new 'spiritual' quality to Christians: they receive the Holy Spirit (see DeMaris, Chapter 22 in this volume). This can be performed by special ritual acts: the imposition of hands (Acts 8:17) or unction with oil (Tertullian, *Bapt*. 7). But baptism also becomes more and more an exorcistic ritual, protecting against evil demons and the Satan. We find an increasing ritualization of this exorcistic aspect of baptism. The earliest references to baptism lack this exorcistic aspect (cf. Barn. 11:11; Herm. Sim. IX, 16.4; Justin, *1 Apol*. 61–5). In some gnostic testimonies from the second century CE, however, baptism is connected with prayers for immunity against evil powers (Irenaeus, *Haer*. 2:5) or even with a renunciation of evil powers (Clement, *Exc*. 77.1). Very soon the exorcism is institutionalized in the baptisms of the main church (Acts Thom. 157; *Can. Hipp.* 108). The *renuntiatio diaboli* becomes a constitutive part of this ritual. But baptism took on this exorcistic function only as a secondary aspect; it was above all an adorcistic ritual, with a subsidiary exorcistic significance. The two forms of healing rituals were combined in a single one. But baptism was a once-and-for-all ritual. Even the baptized may fall ill. We therefore have to expect new healing rituals to arise.

Healing Rituals: Rituals for Crisis

As a second form of ritualization of healing we find special rites for sick Christians as crisis rituals (cf. Uro 2016: 100): 'adorcistic' healings, with new ritual elements: anointing, imposition of hands, incantations of the name of the Lord, prayer. In Mark 6:13, the disciples are said to have 'anointed many with oil who were sick and cured them'. According to 1 Cor. 12:9, some Christians have the 'gifts of healing'. According to James 5:13–16, the elders of the congregation come together if a member is sick in order to pray for him, anoint him with oil, and heal in the name of the Kyrios

(probably Jesus, but perhaps also God). All these elements are new compared to the healings of Jesus: Prayers were no part of Jesus' healings; they substitute the words for Jesus. Oil was never used by Jesus; oil is a substitute for saliva and other magical substances. Jesus never used God's name in his healings; his 'name' (or God's) is a substitute for his personal presence. Since anointing with oil became part of baptism (Tertullian, *Bapt*. 7) the healing ritual of anointing can be understood as an activation of the transfer of the Holy Spirit by baptism. Baptism was unique, special healing rituals were rare exceptions; but Early Christianity made use of a regular repetitive ritual, the Eucharist.

The Eucharist: A Ritual of the Renewed Community

The Eucharist too became the source of healing power, and this power could be renewed again and again. Paul recognizes at least the negative magical power of the Eucharist: all who partake in the Eucharist in an unworthy manner risk illness and death (1 Cor. 11:27.30). Justin, on the other hand, bears witness to its positive effect: after the shared Eucharist, the deacons bring bread and wine to the sick into their houses (Justin, *1 Apol*. 67.5–6). He may be attributing a healing power to the Eucharist. At the very least, the deacons were hereby supporting the sick members of their congregation.

Deacons: The Network of Supporters

This demonstrates a fourth development in the support offered sick persons: the organization of a network of supporters (of deacons). The deacons cared not only for the sick, but also for the poor—and a sick person, in those days, was at risk of poverty. At least one theory of the efficacy of pre-modern healing, the theory of social healing (Sax 2008), attributes to support networks a crucial significance. This diaconal support for sick persons was the predecessor of Christian hospitals. From 311 CE onward, all bishops were obligated to establish hospitals.

Four Approaches to the Efficacy of Healings

If we distinguish between 'illness' and 'disease' (Pilch 2000), or between 'Kranksein' and 'Krankheit' (Groddeck 1984: 24–6), we can say that early Christian healing treats illness independent of the organic disease by transforming the social role, the self-estimation, and the confidence of the sick person. On the one hand, there is bottom-up

causality: from the organic disease to the illness of the whole person. On the other hand, there is also top-down causality—from the improvement of the psychic and social situation of an ill person to organic disease. The four labels for pre-modern healing—charismatic, symbolic, ritual, and social healing (cf. Theissen 2010)—refer to different aspects of top-down causality (cf. Bichmann 1995: 46).

Charismatic Healing

The term 'charismatic healing' refers to the personal relationship between the healer and his adherents. This is expressed by the formula 'Your faith has saved you.' The faith is created by the rumour of Jesus' miraculous deeds (cf. Mark 1:28.45; 5:14.20; 7:24). This rumour functioned as a faith-generating propaganda and created a placebo effect. In addition, the healings of Jesus and the first Christians combined the magical and the personal to support this effect. Both aspects can be explained by two psychological hypotheses proposed to explain the placebo effect, namely, conditioning and expectancy (Brody 2010). We all know by 'conditioned learning' that words give comfort and that contact with hands and mouth express love and care. Such elements trigger a sense of security and acceptance. The efficacy of the magical aura, on the other hand, is based on the expectancy that is aroused by rare phenomena. Such an aura raises cognitive expectations that a powerful healer is at work. Thus, Jesus takes the sick person aside, speaks mysterious words, and uses saliva. The magical surplus supports the healing effects: if people perceive the healer as a professional and powerful healer in an adequate setting and with a magical aura, they have more confidence in him. Faith is thus the key to the healing power of Jesus. We can therefore also apply the expectancy model in order to explain these healings. A deep-rooted expectation that a therapeutic practice (even an inert medicine) will be effective enhances its efficacy, especially if this expectation is shared by patient and physician. This expectation activates the body's own physical and chemical substances. The patient feels the care and compassion of the healer and experiences mastery over his illness. Thus, we have in our brains a wonderful pharmacy that offers no manufactured medicine; rather, symbols and other cognitive convictions activate the body's healing potential, thereby supporting the healing process.

Symbolic Healing

The second term, 'symbolic healing', refers to the cognitive imaginations working in the healer and his clients. In ancient therapies, we encounter two symbolic concepts, adorcism and exorcism: the imagination of a magical power filling the client, and the imagination of an antagonistic struggle freeing the possessed individual from the demon. Neither the healing energy nor the demons are physical realities; rather, they are powerful symbols working within the minds of the sick person and the healer. Other

imaginations are less frequent: the forgiving of sins (Mark 2:1–12) and a declaration that a leper is ritually clean (Mark 1:40–5). We also find the conviction that the transformation of a sick person is part of an eschatological transformation of the whole world. The adorcist aspect of healing corresponds to the coming of the Kingdom of God; the exorcist aspect to the defeat of Satan in eschatological times. It is significant that we find these symbolic interpretations only in the 'word' tradition, which was probably transmitted by itinerant followers of Jesus (Matt. 10:7–8), whereas they are absent in the narrative tradition, transmitted among other people as well. Both the charismatic relationship and symbolic interpretations constitute the psychosomatic dimension of healings and exorcisms, but they always have an external aspect, supporting and reinforcing these internal psychic processes.

Ritual Healing

The third term, 'ritual healing', refers to this external aspect, i.e. the visible performance of healing manipulations according to traditional patterns, which can be repeated again and again: the laying on of hands or the use of saliva. These ritual devices triggered a tradition of healing in early Christianity, differing somewhat from the one associated with Jesus. If a member of the congregation is sick, the elders come together; they are to pray for him, anoint him with oil, and heal in Jesus' name (James 5:13–16). The development from Jesus to early Christianity changed the practice of healing and its understanding: The healing rite in James 5 does not take place apart from the public, but in the assembly of the elders by the bed of the sick person. The healing rite activates confidence not only between the elders and the sick patient, but also in third figures: in God through prayer, in Jesus by calling his name. Saliva is replaced by oil. The charisma of Jesus is reified; it is now independent of the personal quality of the participants. The collective act of the forgiving of sins demonstrates in a ritual way the basic condition of all symbolic healing: the restitution of social harmony within the community.

Social Healing

The fourth term, 'social healing', refers to the community within which the ritual acts are performed. This aspect of faith-cures in the New Testament is in harmony with modern research: according to the theory of social healing (Sax 2008), pre-modern healers activate social help for their patients and dissolve social conflicts. The reduction of stress by the overcoming of deep-rooted conflicts within a family, tribe, or village facilitates the healing processes. Jesus' healing indeed activated social support in favour of the sick. In the beginning of the stories we encounter the motif of vicarious faith—even of a faith working at a distance. Those with vicarious faith are supporters. At the end of each miracle story, the healed are sent back to their homes and families. Some symbols refer

directly to social peace: the forgiveness of sins can reconcile a group. In such cases, we can apply the theory of social healing. The sick persons are embedded in their social group, and the healer activates social support for them. The supporters' faith is thus important for the efficacy of healing. The shared faith may have positive effects, reducing social stress and conflicts.

But there is a problem: Jesus' healings provoke conflicts as well. The theory of social healing as reducing social stress must therefore be modified if it is to be applied to Jesus' healings. First of all, violating norms increases the authority of the charismatic healer. This effect can be observed in the texts. Jesus says to the paralytic: 'Son, your sins are forgiven' (Mark 2:5). The scribes protest: 'Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?' (Mark 2:7). To declare forgiveness is the privilege of God and his priests. Jesus' authority is divine authority. In John 5, Jesus legitimizes his healing on the Sabbath with the argument: 'My Father is still working and I also am working' (John 5:17). A third example is the healing of the leper. Jesus says to him, 'Be made clean!' (Mark 1:41). He declares him clean and sends him to the priest for an official declaration. But Jesus has already given this declaration, and the healed leper therefore does not visit the priest. The implicit logic in these examples is that the person who is justified in violating rules must have the same authority as the source of those rules, i.e. God.

The same is true of the healed person. If the healer risks a conflict in order to help a person, his doing so sends a message: that healing is so important that even the violation of norms is justified. This increase in value concerns the healed person as well. When Jesus breaks the Sabbath norms in order to heal, he demonstrates that the interests of human beings are more important than the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). Hence the breaking of norms may sometimes be liberating and reconciling.

Thus, we can say that social healing does not always reduce conflict and stress. Reducing these within one social reference group may coincide with an increase in both in another group. We have to take into account that early Christianity as a whole not only reduced social conflicts but also increased them for its members. They enjoyed some healing charisma within their small congregations, but had to tolerate discrimination within the society as a whole. Healing should also be seen in some regard as a battlefield. Even if an act of healing is not an exorcism, it is embedded in social conflict.

Conclusion: An Attempt at a Theory of the Efficacy of Healings

The efficacy of ritual healings can be explained by a theory of effective correspondence that combines the four approaches introduced above. There is an effective correspondence (1) between the healer and the sick person, (2) between the sick person and his environment, (3) between internal and external processes, and (4) between different

aspects of cognitive knowledge. This theory is inspired by one advanced by Rösing (1995: 714–27). The four-fold model can be elaborated as follows:

1. The *charismatic* correspondence between healer and sick person requires a consensus between them as to the object of their acts, so that both can activate those aspects of their symbolic worlds that can be referred to the object. Jesus has an understanding of himself as a powerful healer, with adorcist and exorcist power, and people attribute to him such healing power.
2. The *social* correspondence between the sick person and his supporters in the environment reduces stress and conflict and improves the chances of a healing. Their faith activates the adorcist power; conflicts with the social environment have a function comparable to exorcist power.
3. The *ritual* correspondence between internal and external processes during the performance of a healing supports the efficacy of internal cognitive symbols. Symbolic healing is more effective if internal psychic processes are accompanied by external acts. We have seen that external ritual elements highlight an internal personal relationship: all other relationships disappear.
4. The *symbolic* correspondence between knowledge of our own life in the form of anthropological symbols and of the cosmos in form of cosmic symbols further supports the efficacy of healing. For Jesus and the first Christians, their healing activities were embedded in the transformation of the whole world. The Kingdom of God is both, spreading an emanating positive power and victory over demonic powers.

In conclusion, we can say that Jesus' healings can be categorized as a charismatic, symbolic, ritual, and social activity. Charismatic and symbolic healing refer to its psychosomatic dimension, ritual and social healing to its socio-somatic dimension. Healing acts are facilitated by personal charisma and mediated by internal symbols; they have adorcist and exorcist features. Healing rituals are embodied and socially embedded. They are only effective if they are embedded in a social context with charismatics, symbolic interpretations, and social support.

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CHAPTER 26

SACRIFICIAL PRACTICE AND LANGUAGE

CHRISTIAN A. EBERHART

Introduction

The discussion of the topic of 'sacrificial practice' in a volume dedicated to the complex and fascinating theme of ritual allows the exploration of many historical periods and a variety of Hebrew Bible texts. The situation changes to some degree when restricting the area of inquiry to 'the earliest Christians', which includes an overview of New Testament literature. To state a certain dilemma at the outset: New Testament texts occasionally refer to what can be labelled 'sacrificial practice and language'. But such practice and language usually do not occur in the context of actual rituals. Instead, they consist, first, of 'normal' human behaviour in the framework of interpersonal relations and, second, of christological images and terminology, both of which are accompanied by, or articulated through, the use of sacrificial metaphors. Hence 'sacrificial practice', in this metaphorical sense, can be the renewal of one's mind, the display of genuine love, or showing respect and honour according to Rom. 12:1–13; sacrificial language can be the example of the 'sacrifice of Jesus' for humans according to Eph. 5:1–2. Actual sacrificial practice belonging to the realm of ritual, however, is mostly absent from New Testament texts, with a few exceptions. These exceptions are occasional notes to offer sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem, and especially the celebration of the Eucharist/Communion, which may be considered a substitute for the early Jewish sacrificial cult. The parameters of this complex situation will be explored here.

In this chapter, I understand 'ritual' as an extended sequence of more or less inalterable formal acts that is distinguished from ordinary social interaction or behaviour because its performance—carried out by ritual specialists or people of authority at locations with high religious significance and at distinctive recurring occasions—is understood to establish certain conventions, seal contracts, and generate ideas of the sacred. Similarly, the term 'rite' refers to a shorter sequence of such acts; usually a number

of rites may compose a ritual (Rappaport 1999: 24–7; Gruenwald 2003: 6–12; Dücker 2007: 14–18; Klingbeil 2010: § 1.1). Typically neither term exists in the source languages; they are modern interpretive categories. Second, the term 'sacrifice' denotes, when used in this chapter, activities belonging to, or language derived from, sacrificial rituals (in this case in biblical cultures). Such sacrifices take place on or at special locations such as altars and sanctuaries/temples; they are performed by special people of religious authority with especially selected materials to conform to established 'rituals'. Thus, I do not use the term 'sacrifice' to denote, as a modern interpretive category, the tragic loss of goods, one's health, or even one's life.

This chapter starts with an investigation of the multifaceted relationship between sacrificial practice and metaphorical language in different strands of the early Christian movement before and after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. Seen as the residence of God, this temple was central to the religious and cultural identity of Judaism. The worship of God at this location featured a variety of sacrificial rituals that had been evolving over centuries. Like all Jews, Jesus would have been familiar with these rituals, but he faced them with some ambivalence. On the one hand, Jesus explains how sacrifice relates to personal reconciliation and advises others to offer sacrifices according to the early Jewish tradition (Matt. 5:23–4; 8:4). On the other hand, he is never portrayed as offering an actual sacrifice at the Temple of Jerusalem; rather, his second visit there, commonly known as the 'Cleansing of the Temple', is one of the most controversial scenes in his entire activity. In light of this ambiguous attitude, the provenance and meaning of the Eucharist will be assessed as a reference to a core cultic event (Exod. 24) in a festive setting that would not be considered cultic by traditional Jewish standards. Thus, this specific celebration steeped with symbolic meaning may be understood as a 'template' in early Christianity for the use of traditional cultic and particularly sacrificial metaphors. It will be explored, first, in theological perspective within the matrix of textually explicit traditional Jewish and early Christian beliefs and, second, from a ritual theory perspective that focuses on 'latent' functions of ritual, affirming the Eucharist as a renewal ritual. Furthermore, this chapter investigates how early Christian authors have deployed sacrificial metaphors, specifically those with Christological import.[1]

The Temple in Jerusalem and Its Sacrificial Rituals at the Time of Jesus

The typical location for the Jewish practice of sacrificial rituals early in the first century CE was the Temple in Jerusalem. (The existence of other sanctuaries in Heliopolis

[1] This chapter is an adaptation and further advancement of the arguments put forth in my previous publications: Eberhart (2011; 2016).

for Egyptian Diaspora Jews and on Mt Gerizim, built in Persian times as a result of the increasing alienation between the Jewish and Samaritan communities, cannot be elaborated here; cf. Frey 1999: 173–86; Steyn 2016.) Such rituals were also the point of origin of sacrificial language in New Testament literature. This language either briefly referenced or described such rituals or alluded to them metaphorically. Jews at that time were familiar with the temple and its rituals because of the traditional religious obligation to participate in the annual festivals of Passover (*Pesach*), the Festival of Weeks (*Shavuot*), and the Festival of Booths (*Sukkot*). During these holidays and on other occasions, Jews would embark on pilgrimages to the Holy City of Jerusalem where they gathered at the temple to perform sacrificial rituals and celebrate together while commemorating their common history and affirming their faith in their God YHWH (Exod. 23:14–17; 34:23; Deut. 16:16). Jews considered the temple to be the residence of their God, which made it the location of supreme holiness (1 Sam. 3:15; 2 Sam. 12:20; 1 Kgs 8:10–11; 9:10, 15; cf. George 2009: 174–9). Moreover, since ritual theory is usually attentive to spatial aspects and their social connotations (Gruenwald 2003: 27), it should be noted that pilgrims, in the course of their travels, gradually approached the sanctuary as their common destination. Thus, a strong sense of national and religious identity was generated and fostered due to the gathering of like-minded people, forging feelings of corporate strength and pride. Towards the end of the so-called Second Temple period (from 515 BCE to 70 CE), the parents of Jesus, who were members of the Jewish community in Nazareth, also joined such religious festivals (Luke 2:41). In addition, they travelled to Jerusalem to offer the required sacrifices after the birth of Jesus (2:22–4, in observance of the Mosaic ordinances of Lev. 12:6–8). They probably did the same for each of the brothers and sisters of Jesus. The temple of that era is generally known as the Herodian Temple, since Herod the Great (74/73–4 BCE), appointed king by the Romans in 40 BCE, started to renovate and enlarge it in 18 BCE, a building campaign that would only be completed in 63 CE. Among the Christian authors of the first century CE, this building was particularly important to the author of the Gospel according to Luke (cf. Ganser-Kerperin 2000).

A major component of the worship at this temple were ritual sacrifices. The most detailed textual information on these rituals is featured in Lev. 1–7, which in all likelihood represents the post-exilic practice. By and large, this practice was probably also in effect later in the Second Temple period and in the days of Jesus (cf. Eberhart 2016: 19–23). This means among other things that the rituals of five different types of sacrifice (burnt offering, cereal offering, communion offering, sin offering, and guilt offering) were then being performed at the temple. Some of their key concepts were utilized by several Jewish groups to metaphorically articulate principal aspects of their piety, worship practice, and ethics (see, e.g. Pss. 27:6; 50:14, 23; 51:19; 119:108; Prov. 15:8). Such metaphors could, at times, reflect a certain degree of ambivalence towards or criticism of the sacrificial cult at the Temple in Jerusalem. The New Testament, however, does not contain much detailed information about sacrificial rituals.

The Ambiguous Attitude of Jesus towards Sacrificial Rituals

The New Testament Gospels never describe how a sacrifice is offered, although their narratives are set in a time when the Herodian Temple was still intact and its ritual worship operative. At best, temple and rituals feature as occasional backgrounds (Luke 1:8–11; 13:1). The Gospels portray Jesus as mentioning sacrifices sporadically: He requests that the person whom he healed from a skin disease show himself to the priest and offer the sacrifices ordained by Moses (Matt. 8:4; Mark 1:44; with reference to Lev. 14:2–32). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus briefly mentions the process of offering sacrifices only to suggest that it should be interrupted and the sacrificial material left on the altar when one becomes aware of an unresolved interpersonal conflict (Matt. 5:23–4). This passage suggests that the ceremoniously correct performance of sacrifices was less important to Jesus than attempts to procure reconciliation and establish peace within one's social environment, which necessitated action outside of the temple precincts; hence the appeal to 'go' and resolve the issue. Later Jesus is also depicted as criticizing the tradition of swearing by the altar or by the sacrifice on the altar (Matt. 23:18–19). Here, too, details about the ritual process are lacking.

What might have been the attitude of Jesus towards the Herodian Temple and its worship and rituals? While his response to the person whom he healed from skin disease features no specific aversion, a different attitude emerges from the famous scene commonly called the 'Cleansing of the Temple' (Mark 11:15–19; Matt. 21:12–17; Luke 19:45–8; John 2:13–22). Soon after his entry into Jerusalem, Jesus '… entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves' (Mark 11:15). He went on to call the temple a 'den of robbers' (11:17), referencing Jeremiah's temple speech (Jer. 7:11; for a more thorough discussion on the adoption of this episode in other New Testament Gospels, see Betz 1997: 458–9).[2] One of the most controversial scenes in the public ministry of Jesus, this episode is difficult to construe as an appreciation of the Jewish sanctuary and its worship rituals in his day and age. It conveys at least an increasing controversy over religious authority and agency between the Sadducees, who were the Jewish group in charge of temple operations, and Jesus. In Mark's Gospel, the audience or readers are immediately reminded of the dimension of the problem and the connection to the fatal outcome of the Jesus story: 'And when the chief priests and the scribes heard [the words of Jesus against the temple], they kept

[2] Due to the limited space of this chapter, I cannot elaborate on the adoption of this episode in other New Testament Gospels.

looking for a way to kill him' (Mark 11:18).[3] Moreover, Jesus occasionally quotes prophetic words that convey a critical stance towards the sacrificial cult of their time (Matt. 9:13; 12:7 both quoting Hos. 6:6). He follows a mostly prophetic tradition of utterances reflecting on the temple and its sacrificial worship. It is manifest in his reference to Jeremiah's temple speech; other Hebrew Bible examples include 1 Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:11–17; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21–4. This tradition, however, is no categorical rejection of the sacrificial cult as such; instead, it conveys criticism primarily because of social justice issues in Israel and Judah. It ultimately aims at establishing a balance between temple worship and ethics, but posits that, as long as such an equilibrium does not yet exist, God would not accept sacrifices (cf. Eberhart 2013: 63–8; see also Eidevall 2011: 50–1). An ancient source suggests that other problems were nevertheless perceived as well. Josephus complains that the temple renovations under King Herod were an attempt at hellenizing and romanizing the traditional Jewish cult and abusing it to legitimize Herod's kingship (*Ant*. 15:421; see also Betz 1997: 465).

If an ambivalent attitude of Jesus towards the temple and the authorities of the first century—but not against the temple cult as such—emerges from New Testament texts, then this might explain the above observation that these texts put relatively little emphasis on actual descriptions of the temple and its sacrificial cult.

Sacrificial Language in Christological Contexts

Already the first followers of Jesus had to cope with the problem of understanding his particularly ignominious death on the cross, and this remains a problem for many Christians to this day. Thus, Richard E. DeMaris asks: 'But *how* does Jesus's horrendous ending constitute a beneficial action for many?' (2008: 95, italics original). To articulate that this death could have any positive significance, the earliest Christians displayed creativity and terminological resourcefulness by drawing on a variety of backgrounds. They also referred to the well-known temple worship, but this was by no means the only source of imagery and concepts. At times they combined such terminology and motifs so as to multiply their suggestive potential.

[3] Adele Reinhartz probes the question whether the Gospel authors see a direct link between the temple cleansing and the death of Jesus, and concludes that they do not:

> [T]he high priest Caiaphas and other authorities among the Jews are indeed disturbed by Jesus, but their anger and distrust do not stem from any threat to their authority. Rather, they are focused on his popularity with the crowds, and the principal behaviors which led to that popularity: teaching and healing. (Reinhartz 2013: 110)

It remains to be asked, however, whether the popularity of Jesus with the crowds was not rather the reason why he could not be killed because of his stance against their authority, which was clearly manifest in the temple action and further corroborated by the quotation of Jeremiah's speech.

How then did the earliest Christians use sacrificial language, and what constituted such usage? The following terminology is usually derived from and refers to sacrificial rituals: 'blood' (Greek *haima*), 'offering' (*dōron, prosphora*; both can also be translated as 'gift'), 'sacrifice' (*thusia*), 'to atone' (*hilaskomai*), 'for a pleasing odour' (*eis osmēn euōdias*), and 'pleasant' (*euarestos*). Occasionally, other words such as 'covenant' (*diathēke*) further help to determine a sacrificial background of concepts. By contrast, the following terminology is not derived from sacrificial rituals: In Rom. 8:3, the rendering of *peri hamartias* as 'sin offering' is questionable; Paul's phrase 'he made him to be sin' (2 Cor. 5:21) is a reference to the scapegoat ritual of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:20–2); and references to the 'Passover' (1 Cor. 5:7 [despite the verb *thuō*, which only refers to the slaughter of Passover lamb]; see also Rev. 5:6; 12:11; 13:8) are derived from an apotropaic ritual (Exod. 12:7, 13, 22–3). Neither the scapegoat nor the Passover should be regarded as ritual sacrifices. The scapegoat ritual in Lev. 16:20–2 is an elimination ritual, which means that miasmic substances are transported away from the sanctuary. Its dynamics are, therefore, diametrically opposed to those of sacrificial rituals. According to Exod. 12, the blood of the Passover lamb was applied to the doors of the houses of the Israelites in order to protect Israel from disaster and death. Therefore, Passover was actually an archaic apotropaic ritual (cf. Schlund 2005: 404–5). In many ancient sources (exceptions: Deut. 16:1–8; Josephus, *Ant*. 11:110), it is not regarded as a cultic sacrifice because it was not carried out at a sanctuary, no priest was involved, and no part of the Passover lamb was burnt on any altar as an offering for God. Given the graphic descriptions of eschatological battles between heavenly and satanic forces featured in the Book of Revelation, the reference to the Passover lamb was supposed to convey the kind of protection that Israel had first experienced during the exodus from Egypt. Finally, the predication of Jesus as 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29, 36) is most likely a mixed reference to both the Passover tradition and the Fourth Song of the Suffering Servant (Isa. 52:13–53:12). In the early Jewish sacrificial cult, sin offerings are usually sacrificed for the forgiveness of sins, but lambs are not the most characteristic animals for this type of sacrifice. The Fourth Song of the Suffering Servant introduces the comparison of the anonymous servant to a 'lamb that is led to the slaughter' in Isa. 53:7, and there are implications that the servant carries the sin of others in a vicarious fashion. However, Isa. 53:7 continues the metaphor with the words 'like a sheep that is silent before its shearers', suggesting rather a profane scenario than a sacrificial ritual (cf. Eberhart 2013: 178–201).

One of the earliest instances of sacrificial language in New Testament literature is found in Rom. 3:25 where Paul describes God as putting Jesus forward 'as a place of atonement (Greek *hilastērion*) by his blood'. Earlier scholarship assumed a martyrological background with reference to 4 Macc. 17:22 (Stowers 1994: 211–13; adopted by Ullucci 2012: 75–6). However, the recent re-dating of this book to the late first or early second century CE makes such a connection impossible since Paul dictated his Letter to the Romans in the spring of 56 or 57 CE (Jewett 2007: 23; Schnelle 2002: 130). In search of an alternative background, Wolfgang Kraus explores the Septuagint equivalents of traditional cult terminology and determines that a connection to the so-called Mercy

Seat, the gold slab on top of the Ark of the Covenant measuring 2.5 by 1.5 cubits, needs to be taken into consideration for the interpretation of Rom. 3:25 (Kraus 2008: 205). On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would sprinkle the blood of sin offerings against this Mercy Seat. Effecting atonement for the sanctuary, this process was to eliminate sins and impurity according to Jewish traditions of the Torah (Lev. 16:15–16, 33; Hartenstein 2005: 136; Eberhart 2018: 84–6). Christian texts from the later decades of the first century CE also articulate the connection of blood, purification, and forgiveness inherent in these rituals, for example the christological statement that 'the blood of Jesus . . . cleanses us from all sin' (1 John 1:7; see also Heb. 9:22), and align it with the concepts of 'atonement' (*hilasmos*; I John 2:2; 4:10). They remember, therefore, that sacrificial blood was used as a purifying agent in the cult of the temple that no longer existed then (Kraus 2008: 212–13).

Informed by David I. Kertzer's and Catherine Bell's work on the ambiguous nature of all rituals and Nancy Jay's understanding of an index as a sign connected with its referents as a matter of fact, William K. Gilders recently studied early Jewish blood rites so as to identify 'latent functions' that are usually not recognized by participants in ritual activities or articulated in biblical texts. He concludes that the main goal of blood application activity is to ritually inscribe the status of cult authorities, typically Moses or Aaron, as those who mediate between God and humans. Conversely, these blood rites establish a cultic sphere, indicate access to subsequent meal rites, and define hierarchies at the social, ethical, and ritual level (Gilders 2004: 109–41, 186–91). Finally, such rites also generally serve to indicate a special relationship between God and the people who are the objects of blood application like in the Mosaic covenant of Mt Sinai (Exod. 24:3–8; cf. Gilders 2004: 40–1; also 58–60; for Gruenwald, this 'anthropological' approach addresses sacrifice 'as a universal factor in human behaviour' [2003: 184]). As for the interpretation of Paul's reference in Rom. 3:25 to such traditional ritual categories, these reflections could have various implications. First, the blood of Jesus indicates the creation of a cultic sphere, which designates a space of God's presence. Such a claim would have been important for early Christians since a death by crucifixion could have been construed as divine condemnation. Second, as the passage of Rom. 3:25 continues to say that God 'did this to show his righteousness', such words would have conveyed the exclusive status of God as the giver of mercy and forgiveness. Third, the place of atonement by the blood of Jesus, which is 'effective through faith', is closely connected to the subsequent phrase 'that he [God] himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus' (v. 26). Thus the sphere of God's mercy is considerably extended to all believers as those who are justified and have a special relationship with God. The ongoing scholarly debate over whether or not Paul implicitly criticizes the cult at the Jerusalem Temple with this christological statement can be interpreted as emblematic of the legacy of Jesus.

Since blood manipulation in traditional sacrificial rituals consists of actual ritual activity, the question arises as to whether similar ritual categories can be identified within early Christian communities. Or, to phrase the matter differently, did a conceptual-christological passage such as Rom. 3:25 correspond or relate to any actual ritual activity

that was performed by Christians in the first century CE? It should be noted that further references to the blood of Jesus in the New Testament highlight the aspect of 'sprinkling' (1 Pet. 1:2), thus suggesting physical contact. Moreover, Ithamar Gruenwald suggests that any human community can only be constituted through ritual, typically an initiation ritual (2003: 250). Which ritual activity within the Christian community could this terminology refer to?

The Eucharist of Jesus

Early Christians had their own rituals that served to initiate new members and renew their commitment so as to assure affiliation. The initiation ritual is baptism; it goes back to the itinerant preacher John, who baptized people in the Jordan River for the forgiveness of sins, according to Mark 1:4. Its function as initiation is reflected in the fact that the baptism of Jesus at the hand of John (1:9–11) marks the beginning of his public ministry, together with the receipt of the Holy Spirit. 'Here the basic theme, which also resounds at the very end of this gospel (Mark 15:39), is introduced; it intimates what kind of authority underpinned the work of Jesus . . .' (Hartman 2011: 444). From the perspective of ritual theory, however, the immersion of a human under water may be interpreted as 'a return to pre-existence or non-existence' and 'intentional deconstruction' (Gruenwald 2003: 248–9). This allows for a renewed person to emerge from the waters (John 3:5; Titus 3:5).

Following initiation, the renewal of the Christian community happens through the ritual with bread and wine. It is most easily recognized by the presence of these two food items and consumption after a blessing. These elements and the repeated performance of these actions in specific time intervals mark it as a ritual. By contrast, the surprising number of names for this one ritual (Eucharist, Mass, Last Supper, Lord's Supper, Breaking of Bread, [Holy] Communion, *Qurbana*, Love Feast, etc.) hints at the multitude of diverse interpretations in various Christian denominations and faith communities throughout history and in different locations. What then can be said about its meaning? Or, to adjust the legitimate question of Richard E. DeMaris about the death of Jesus in this case, we may ask, *how* does Jesus' meal rite with bread and wine constitute salvation for many?

Due to the limited scope of this chapter, I can neither comprehensively review the insights of biblical scholarship on this topic nor survey the controversial ecclesiastical debates that span many centuries. Instead, I would like to reflect on the aspects that warrant inclusion of the Last Supper/Eucharist ritual in this chapter on 'sacrificial practice and language'. After all, bread and wine do not feature prominently in sacrificial rituals of the Jewish tradition. However, when speaking the words of institution over the cup, Jesus said, according to the earliest text traditions: 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many' (Mark 14:24), or alternatively: 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood' (1 Cor. 11:25). In the first version, Jesus equated wine

with his own blood, following early Jewish tradition of calling grape juice 'blood of grapes' (Gen. 49:11; Deut. 32:14). Moreover, Jesus did reference narratives about sacrificial practices when calling the cup of wine 'blood of the covenant' or 'new covenant in my blood'. As stated above, the terms 'blood' (Greek *haima*) and 'covenant' (*diathēke*) refer to sacrificial rituals. Specifically, both phrases are quotations from, or allusions to, the Mosaic covenant at Mt Sinai (Exod. 24:3–8). There, Moses had sprinkled the blood of burnt offerings and communion offerings on the people of Israel; he called this blood the 'blood of the covenant' (v. 8). Then Moses and Israel's elders climbed the mountain, where they celebrated in front of and could even see the God of Israel (vv. 10–11). Thus the covenant was established and Israel became God's priestly nation. If Jesus quotes specific key words from the sacrificial component of this narrative, then he probably intended a similar 'effect' to be associated with the ritual that he instigated. Hence the Mosaic covenant was actualized through the ritual activity of sprinkling the blood of sacrificial animals onto the Israelites; the covenant of Jesus would be manifest through drinking wine. The relationship between both covenants is 'antitypical', a term that appropriately emphasizes their continuity over their discontinuity (Backhaus 1996: 294–6). In both cases, therefore, a (new) covenant was being established that transformed the participants of the ritual into a select, priestly community. When adopting this story from the Gospel according to Mark, Matthew adds that this 'blood of the covenant' is 'for the forgiveness of sins' (Matt. 26:28). A theological interpretation of the cup of wine during the Last Supper/Eucharist can thus conceptually explain within the matrix of traditional Jewish and early Christian beliefs how this specific renewal ritual 'worked' in the night before Jesus was crucified and ever since in Christian worship, whenever it is being repeated (Eberhart 2013: 116–30). At least with regard to the cup of wine, this rite conveys salvation for many through forgiveness of sins, which allows a sacred community to form around the saviour Jesus Christ.[4]

The Eucharist developed into its own cultic ceremony in early Christianity, and the sacrificial metaphors in the words of institution, manifest in the phrase 'blood of the covenant', may have aided this progress. An attempt to interpret the sharing of the cup of wine from a ritual theory perspective will favour its socio-cultural realms of meaning or 'latent functions' over explicit 'native' explanations. It will, first of all, take note of who is in charge of the various activities of preparing bread and wine, blessing them and speaking the words of institution, and then distributing them. In fact, the task of carrying out these liturgical actions indicates and legitimizes the position of authority in a Christian community, which is defined as the office mediating between God and humans. This perspective thus affirms the importance of Jesus as the originator and key agent of this renewal ritual and, for the later history of the Christian Church, the leadership role of all ministers who celebrate and distribute this sacrament. Second, from a

[4] It should be noted that the words of institution over the Eucharistic bread do not feature any sacrificial connotations. They will, therefore, not be investigated here.

ritual perspective, the Eucharist is a meal, if only a 'token' meal, and should be explored as such. Also traditional sacrificial rituals, such as the one in Exod. 24, were often followed by a joint meal. By analogy to this aspect, bread and wine and the process of their consumption will be considered here. Not too many studies of the Eucharist have focused on this particular aspect. Yet Ithamar Gruenwald writes: 'It is important to note that food is the core of the ritual. Food sustains life' (2003: 252). Renewal through the Eucharist thus happens, on the one hand, through the literal physical restauration by food consumption. On the other hand, the Last Supper or Eucharist is more specifically about communal eating and the sharing of food. Thus, a latent yet immediate function of this ritual is the establishment or continuation of social relations. Outsiders can be invited to join the group by participating in the meal. Renewal then occurs through social integration and the experience of friendship. Gruenwald focuses the effect of constituting a social group rather on the pronouncement of the words of blessing over the cup, yet the outcome is the same (2003: 253). With regard to the other component of the Eucharist, he comments: 'In eating the bread together, the broken pieces of bread are ritually reassembled and become one again, a united totality' (2003: 256). So the procedure of sharing a token meal is acknowledged as creating a positive, i.e. a formative and integrative, social process.

This central renewal ritual of the Christian community in bread and wine has formative power and is referenced variously in different writings of the New Testament, which in Greek means nothing else but 'new covenant'. In 1 Pet. 1:1–2, for example, the address to 'exiles … who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood' refers to members of those communities who participate regularly in the Eucharist and drink from the cup of wine.[5]

On the other hand, if the Eucharistic cup is considered the covenantal renewal ritual for Christians that, according to Matt. 26:28, even takes away sins, then a certain degree of tension with the sacrificial cult at the Temple in Jerusalem is obvious. From a ritual theory perspective, the sacrificial cult ritually inscribes and legitimizes the Jewish high priest as the ceremonial authority who mediates between God and humans; however, the Eucharist or Communion ritually ascribes a functionally similar role to Jesus or later, as his successors, to Christian apostles and ministers. Also, for the sacrificial cult, the religious community is convened at the temple to participate in actual sacrificial rituals that indicate their special relationship to God. For the Eucharist or Communion, in contrast, the community now meets around the table to participate in the Eucharistic ritual, which likewise indicates their special relationship to God.

[5] However, an important detail should be mentioned in this context. The Greek noun *rantismos*—'sprinkling' occurring in 1 Pet. 1:2 matches more closely the description of the blood application rite in the ordination rituals for Aaron and his sons in Exod. 29:20–1 LXX, which features the related verb *rainō*—'to sprinkle'. Therefore, Lutz Doering recently proposed that the author of 1 Peter probably referred to narratives of both the covenant at Mt Sinai and the ordination rituals (2013: 91; adopted in Vahrenhorst 2016: 68).

Hence the Eucharist or Communion effectively substitutes for the traditional Jewish cult institution. Ithamar Gruenwald thus comments that 'the new cult possessed everything needed to place the Jesus-event as a substitute for Temple worship' (2003: 234). On the one hand, this means a gradual abandonment of worship rituals that had evolved over the course of many centuries. But this ritual development was not limited to only the temple worship. Gruenwald also notes that 'Judaism developed along lines that put increasing emphasis on the doing of rituals' (2003: 231). By contrast, then, earliest Christianity would have developed with the objective of reducing that tendency. The degree to which this substitution would have been perceived as a threat to the Jewish authorities is difficult to overestimate. Since the centralization of the cult during the Deuteronomistic reform, Judaism had its one legitimate sanctuary; at the time of Jesus early in the first century CE, this was the Herodian Temple. The enormous expenditures and efforts for its renovation and enlargement between 18 BCE and 63 CE only contributed further to its status for Judaism. In terms of ritual theory, what is to be considered here is the issue of questioning conformity and authority. In this respect, Roy A. Rappaport suggests that '*invariance of the liturgical order is indispensable to acceptance*' (1999: 285 [emphasis in the original]). In other words, the authority of the temple and the certainty of its sacrificial rituals were manifest for its participants in two parameters, namely, a lack of alternative and changelessness of form (Rappaport 1999: 286). Thus, the temple cult had the quasi-axiomatic quality of 'Ultimate Sacred Postulates' within Judaism (Rappaport 1999: 287–9). Jesus challenged these core aspects of Judaism when he took a critical stance towards the institution of Herod's Temple (not the sacrificial cult per se), specifically in the scene commonly known as the 'Cleansing of the Temple', to institute an alternative covenantal renewal ritual. Early Christianity emerged as a movement without actual sacrificial rituals; in the Eucharist, the ritual component with the cup of wine then adopts some sacrificial imagery precisely because Jesus did not reject the sacrificial cult as such.[6] This characteristic propensity is explored in the next section.

Other Examples of Sacrificial Language among the Earliest Christians

Early Christians used the Jewish sacrificial cult as a source of metaphors in a variety of contexts. I have explored above how the 'place of atonement', understood as the Mercy

[6] This has led some to believe that Christianity is, by its very nature, a non-ritual religion. For example, the co-authored *TRE* article on '*Ritus*' (English: 'rite') features a sub-entry on 'history of religions' and on 'Judaism,' but not on 'Early Christianity' (*TRE* 29: 259–85; a sub-entry on church history and systematic theology deals only with the period following the Reformation). This extreme opinion is, however, not correct. Depending on the definition, a variety of rites and rituals were established within early Christianity. Actual sacrificial rituals at a temple dedicated to such a type of worship, however, were absent.

Seat of the central Jewish sanctuary, as well as blood application rites were referenced in christological concepts. They all are to be seen in connection with the Eucharistic cup of wine. Surprisingly, the actual term 'sacrifice' (Greek *thusia, prosphora*) is rarely ever, and in the four New Testament Gospels indeed never, used christologically. The only such occurrences are found in Eph. 5:2 and then frequently in Hebrews (7:27; 9:26, 28; 10:10, 12, 14; see also 9:14), which means they belong to the latest stages of early christological conceptualization (Ephesians was written between 80 and 90 CE; cf. Schnelle 2002: 351–2; Sellin 2008: 58; Hebrews is to be dated even later; it probably belongs to the late first or early second century CE; cf. Schnelle 2002: 413–14; Karrer 2008: 96–8). What does this particular metaphor imply?

The statement in Eph. 5:2 that 'Christ loved us, too, and gave himself for us as an offering and sacrifice (*prosphoran kai thusian*) for God as a pleasing odour (*eis osmēn euōdias*)' references the ritual activity of burning sacrificial material (obscured in, e.g. NRSV). This leads to the question of the purpose of this ritual element in the early Jewish sacrificial cult. I shall first comment on its function and meaning according to explicit textual information in the Torah; I shall then engage in further reflections on 'latent' functions from a ritual theory perspective. Finally, I shall explore what the Christological metaphors in Eph. 5:2 and Hebrews conveyed to their early Christian audiences.

It is important to realize that, against modern misconceptions, sacrificial rituals in early Judaism did not focus on animal slaughter. First, there is no textual indication that this act had any special significance in the sacrificial process. (Similar observations seem to apply to the sacrificial cult of ancient Egypt [cf. Frankfurter 2011: 76–83], although the frequent juxtaposition of sacrificial motifs and war scenes in Roman iconography warrants the conclusion that Ancient Rome saw both as related [cf. Nasrallah 2011: 142–66].) Second, the pertinent laws for sacrifices in Lev. 1–7 feature detailed instructions on five different types of sacrifice. As laws for a cereal offering, prepared from vegetal materials, oil, and frankincense, do exist, it turns out that the only ritual activity that is common to all five types of sacrifice is not the act of slaughter, but the burning rite on the central 'altar of burnt offering'. Therefore, we need to inquire about the meaning of this rite as it was articulated by the ancient religious communities who witnessed and performed these sacrifices. Fortunately, the Torah contains a lot of pertinent information. The ritual activity of burning sacrificial materials on the altar is usually accompanied by the formula that it produces the 'pleasing odour for YHWH' (Lev. 1:9, 13, 17; 2:2; 4:31; 8:21 etc.; its Septuagint rendering has been cited in the Christological passage in Eph. 5:2). Providing an interpretive commentary on the rising smoke of the altar fire and describing the immediate influence on Israel's God, this formula specifically conveys the divine acceptance of the sacrifice and is the reason why all five types of sacrifices in Lev. 1–7 are considered 'offerings (Greek *dōron*) for YHWH' (Lev. 1:2, 3, 10; 2:1, 4; 3:1; 4:23, 28, 32; 5:11; 7:38).

What, then, might be the 'latent' functions of this ritual activity from a ritual theory perspective? Similar to blood rites, the burning rite at the central altar was also carried out by ordained priests. This activity ritually indicates their authoritative role and thus their special status within the cult institution. On the other hand, it also indicates the status of the party of the offerer since provisions for all types of sacrifice depend on one's

personal prosperity and convey social distinctions. Looking at other aspects of the sacrificial ritual, it may be suggested that the activity of bringing a material offering to the sanctuary would publicly display a movement towards, and a 'connection' of the offerer with, the location of highest religious and cultural prominence.

What do these considerations yield for the interpretation of the sacrificial metaphor in the Christological passage in Eph. 5:2? Broadly speaking, calling the examples of Christ's loving service to humanity 'an offering and sacrifice for God' ascribes the quality of sacred worship to all of his activities. It is important to notice that such a classification is far from self-evident given the context of early Christianity; after all, Jesus and his followers were at times rejected by Jewish religious authorities as blasphemers (Mark 14:63–5; Matt. 26:65–8; Acts 6:11). Moreover, Eph. 5:2 references the interpretive formula that typically accompanies the burning rite, thus the *tertium comparationis* is the aspect of acceptance. It conveys to the audience that the life and death of Jesus were accepted by God and divinely sanctioned (Eberhart 2013: 25–77).

Elsewhere in the New Testament, sacrificial metaphors are deployed with exactly these connotations. Thus, Paul writes in Rom. 12:1: 'I therefore urge you, brothers and sisters, through the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice (*thusia*), living, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable worship.' This statement occurs no longer in a Christological statement but at the beginning of an extended paraenetic paragraph that advises the congregation about proper conduct. The insistence on a sacrifice that is 'living' demonstrates that death is indeed not the point of sacrifice, as stated above; instead, the aspect of acceptance is once more important. The metaphor generally conveys that daily living will be considered part of worship. Paul employs similar sacrificial metaphors also in Phil. 4:18 where he calls material gifts received through the hands of Epaphroditus 'a pleasing odour, an acceptable sacrifice (*thusia*), pleasant to God'.

By contrast, Hebrews, written almost half a century after Paul's letters, uses the term 'sacrifice' differently. It employs it in an extended Christological context that combines the role of the high priest and the function of sacrifice and sees Jesus as both. The cultic backdrop is mostly the scenery of the Day of Atonement (Heb. 9:6–10) during which Jesus offers himself 'once for all' as a sacrifice (7:27; 10:10, 12, 14; cf. Finlan 2011: 91–6). This means that the sacrificial metaphor operates now through an exclusive reference to the death of Jesus. It is depicted as prerequisite for accessing the heavenly sanctuary where Jesus sits at God's right hand to advocate on behalf of humans.

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CHAPTER 27

RITUAL AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

COLLEEN SHANTZ

Introduction

The categories of ritual and religious experience do not overlap completely, but the two coincide in a rich interplay of mutual influence, though few studies of biblical literature have considered these questions (but see Segal 1990; Johnson 1998; Hurtado 2000; Pilch 2011). From one side, certain ancient ritual practices could effectively induce changes in modes of consciousness. From the other side, such changes often offered a form of validation for new movements or ritual innovations (as well as fodder for accusations of deviance from religious rivals). Thus, rather than treating the two categories as distinct perspectives from which to analyse the same phenomenon, this chapter considers the interplay between psycho-biological factors of ecstatic experience and the socio-cultural structures of ritual. To some extent, the sliding overlay of these two categories might help to clarify critical issues related to ritual.

Typically, in contemporary Western societies, altered states of consciousness, or ASCs, are deemed to be unusual and even abnormal. However, consciousness shifts regularly in every culture, encompassing states such as day-dreaming, playing a complex piano piece from memory, and hearing disembodied voices. Societies that have been shaped by the scientific enlightenment tend to value attentive, wakeful states over all other modes of consciousness while other societies, like those of early Christianity, tended to be more multimodal. Some of those shifts in consciousness are intimately connected with religious contexts and, hence, the term 'religious experience' denotes a spectrum with rare phenomena like hallucinations (primarily visions but also other sensory modes) at one end and more common experiences of heightened emotions at the other. Each of these phenomena across the spectrum involves changes in consciousness.

Two caveats are necessary at the outset of this discussion, one concerning the use of texts and the second regarding the category of religious experience. As to the first,

not every mention of religious experience in early Christian texts is a representation of an actual practice or event. Texts are composed for many reasons, only one of which might be to describe events as they took place. Nonetheless, even when an account is written primarily for apologetic purposes or to present an idealized version of events, it still communicates something about contemporaneous values and beliefs. So, for example, while it is unlikely that the array of meaningful dreams depicted in the Acts of the Apostles is a factual representation of original events, it remains a reflection of the general valuing of dreams.

The second caveat is that the concept of religious experience has had a bumpy reception in the critical study of religion. It was restored to significance at the beginning of the twentieth century with the publication of William James's (1902) resilient *The Varieties of Religious Experiences*. James's use of psychological perspectives helped to legitimize religious experience as a topic of study but his work also introduced a problem that has plagued the category for ensuing decades. James described religious experience as 'pure experience' (esp. James 1912), by which he meant (in part) those conditions in which human perceptions are not mediated conceptually or materially but directly apprehended. However, this concept fed perennialist ideas—the notion that all religious experience was of a single, special kind. This claim to a kind of universalism of experience was met by sharp objections of cultural constructivists, who demonstrated the ways in which cultural norms shape not only the interpretation, but even the phenomena of religious experiences. In its strongest articulation, constructivism claims that culture conditions every aspect of experience. In the ensuing decades, anthropological and neurological studies have continued to identify a more nuanced interplay between the universal biological character of ASCs and the ways in which they are supported and constrained by specific cultural structures. So, for example, although specific cultures develop distinctive ritual forms, those forms both enable and constrict universal psycho-biological capacities. The next section turns to the oldest evidence for this interplay between culture and biology.

Ecstasy and Evolution

A number of cave sites, dating from the Upper Palaeolithic period, offer the oldest traces of ritual coinciding with the cultivation of heightened experience. These sites have inspired hypotheses about the evolutionary basis of both elements. Foremost among them, archaeologist David Lewis-Williams (2002) has argued that cave paintings of the San people of southern Africa, and subsequently of peoples in Western Europe, demonstrate the rise of shamanism, including its use of ASCs. A few points are key to Lewis-Williams's hypothesis about the significance of this art: (1) that within human evolution it appears as a sudden innovation; (2) that the cave paintings indicate the presence of full consciousness, capable of perceiving images as signifiers; (3) that the paintings are the products of people who attained trance states; and (4) that those people became

specialists and thus initiated social stratification within their societies. Lewis-Williams further argues that these changes mark the beginning of cosmological speculation, and, hence, religion.

The nature of this evidence permits more than one hypothesis for the rise of ritual and ASCs. The strong argument, the one Lewis-Williams makes, is that the appearance of human rituals that employ ASCs represents a case of gene-cultural coevolution. Briefly, this means that the evolution of consciousness (in the transition from Neanderthal to *Homo sapiens*) and the rise of cosmologically sensitive ritual practices were mutually reinforcing genetically-based dynamics. As Lewis-Williams summarizes, during this period 'cosmology, image-making, religion, and developing social distinctions were hardly distinguishable from one another' (2003: 264). This hypothesis is the most ambitious interpretation of this evidence and, indeed, its proof or disproof lies beyond definitive support of the evidence. By contrast, the weakest evolutionary claim is that ASCs and the proto-rituals that accompanied them are merely by-products of the evolution of consciousness; they do not contribute any adaptive advantage but are interesting side-effects of a trait that was selected for other (adaptive) reasons. An intermediate hypothesis would posit the rise of ritual and ecstasy as an *exaptation*: a trait with a secondary adaptive value that is not originally selected but is nonetheless later exploited for adaptive advantage. In this case, *Homo sapiens*' consciousness is the originally adaptive feature. The production of ASCs is a side-effect that turned out to have its own adaptive value for human communities.

The example of cave paintings also illustrates the interplay between genetic and cultural evolution. For the purposes of this discussion, we might note the way *Homo sapiens* capitalized on the features of caves to enable this use of ASC. Caves provided a demarcated space for ritual action, a repository for images, and conditions that facilitate the tuning of consciousness. Such conditions include the means to control sensory stimulation through features like darkness or the flickering of firelight on walls, temperature changes, and sound distortion. For example, a cave at Vari, Attica, inscribed with a dedication to the Nymphs, illustrates the mutual reinforcement of physical location with the potential for ASCs and ritual: only a trace of daylight reaches its interior; stalactites reach down from the ceiling; and it contains a spring as well as dripping water (Ustinova 2009: 61).

As this example suggests, caves also played a role in ritual practices that were both geographically and chronologically closer to early Christianity. As early as the archaic period and extending through the classical, Greek cults hosted a range of special practices in caves, evinced in part by physical remains—both from cave sites themselves and from art—as well as by literature and inscriptions. For example, the possession cult of Pan and the Nymphs was known for practices of prophecy, of possession, and of collective emotional frenzy characterized by fear (Borgeaud 1979). The term *nymphleptos*, or one possessed by the nymph, appears in inscriptions during this period. Furthermore, two of the four primary oracular sites devoted to Apollo (at Delphi in central Greece, and Claros on the coast of Ionia in Asia Minor) were established at caves, as were more than 25% of the most important Greek oracles (Ustinova 2009: 53–4).

To that list of practices based in caves we might add independent religious specialists and mystery cults extending into the first century. For example, Mithraic temples were dug below ground to replicate caves (see Martin, Chapter 19 in this volume).

Key Figures and Phenomena

Whatever the links to that archaic evidence may be, ecstatic practices and practitioners appeared throughout the first few centuries of Christian history. In part, such ecstatic profiles were elaborated in early Christian literature as part of the *mythos* of founding figures. This is especially true of the depiction of Jesus in the Gospels and of the apostles in Acts. However, as argued above, one need not trace too sharp a line between historical events and narrative elaborations since both present ideas about ecstatic practices in ritual contexts.

Jesus as Shaman

Jesus has been identified as a shaman (Craffert 2008), a holy man (Pilch 2011), a healer (Davies 1995; Remus 1997), a magician (Smith 1978), and, in an earlier generation seeking explanations through Hellenistic influence, as a divine man or *theios anēr* (Dibelius 1919; Bultmann 1931). The invocation of each of these categories seeks to account for some distinctive material in the traditions about Jesus while also considering how his contemporaries might have understood original historical practices. Of these roles, shaman has undoubtedly garnered the most influence, as the term has come to indicate almost any religious specialist who uses ASC in order to access spirits—through divination, possession, visions, out-of-body experiences, or exorcisms—on behalf of their social group. This aspect of Jesus's profile is well attested in early Christian literature.

In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus' association with exorcism is especially prominent, but, in addition, three particular scenes form the backbone of a case for ritual stimulation of ASCs in shamanistic pattern (against this view, see Strecker 2002, 2013). They are Jesus's baptism, transfiguration, and testing in the wilderness. Each of these accounts depicts Jesus engaging the spirit world, whether the spirit (of God) in the baptism accounts (Mark 1:9–11; Matt. 3:13–17; Luke 3:21–2; John 1:29–34), both the malevolent figure of Satan and benevolent angels in the testing narrative (Mark 1:12–13; Matt. 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13), or historical characters like Elijah and Moses (Mark 9:2–8; Matt. 17:1–8; Luke 9:28–36), who were thought to have been assumed into heaven at or before death. Of these events, the baptism scene has the most obvious links to ritual, given that the contact with the spirit occurs during (or in the case of Luke immediately after) a ritual act of water purification (see DeMaris, Chapter 22 in this volume). The other two accounts occur in the sensory space of the wilderness. Ritual elements in the testing narrative include the use of a special setting (the wilderness) along with austerities like extended

fasting and solitude. The transfiguration is associated with the calendrical harvest ritual of Sukkot, especially through Peter's desire to build the shelters associated with the festival and through the location on a mountain. Mention of Jesus's luminous appearance, from which the 'transfiguration' scene takes its title, is oblique evidence that the authors understood the event as a change in his mode of consciousness.

A number of other scattered details contribute to the shamanic portrait of Jesus. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus uses special words and gestures to effect healing power (Mark 5:40b–2; 7:33–5). The Lukan pre-crucifixion scene at the Mount of Olives pictures Jesus summoning angelic support as he faces a physical ordeal and death (Luke 22:39–44). Most of all his exorcistic activity, discussed in the next section, portrays him as a master of the supernatural realm.

Spirit Possession and Exorcism

This section discusses a number of ecstatic practices under the single category of spirit possession even though they are often treated as distinct phenomena. Indeed, one might speak of positive and negative spirit possession, but even that division obscures some of their shared features, particularly the displacement of aspects of personality by a spirit, which is indicative of ASC. The positive practice of possession was typically cultivated for the sake of channelling the voice of the god and it was known in many contexts throughout the Mediterranean basin, including Judaism and Israelite religion.

Despite its ubiquity in Mediterranean cultures, spirit possession does not appear in all societies. In fact, anthropologists puzzle over the fact that possession occurs most frequently in societies with class stratification and jurisdictional hierarchy beyond the local level (Bourguignon 1968). Thus, social rigidity and complexity may well be a catalyst to possession. Spirit possession movements also tend to intensify during times of significant social transformation. The colonization of Roman Palestine during the first century CE as well as the origins of Christ groups throughout the cities of the Roman Empire (including Roman colonies like Philippi and Corinth with their stratified governance) are relevant examples of these conditions.

The earliest surviving evidence for Christian possession comes from the ritual gatherings of the Christ assembly in Corinth and included a form of spirit possession that they understood as channelling (1 Cor. 14). Later, in the second century, the New Prophecy, more commonly known as Montanism, was widely identified with its possession practices. The Montanists themselves described their prophecy as spirit possession, claiming for the most part that it was God who spoke through them (e.g. Epiphanius of Salamis, *Pan*. 48:11); and, indeed, even their opponents seemed to agree that the possession was authentic though they debated what kind of spirit was in effect (e.g. Cyprian of Carthage, *Ep*. 74, §§7 and 10). Eusebius cites an early source describing Montanus in a trance: 'he became beside himself, and being suddenly in a sort of frenzy and ecstasy, he raved, and began to babble and utter strange things, prophesying in a manner

contrary to the constant custom of the Church handed down by tradition from the beginning' (*Hist. eccl*. 5.16; Placher and Nelson 2015: 10). As late as the fourth century, the Council of Constantinople required exorcism for any Montanists who wished to convert to catholic Christianity (*Canon* 7). Tertullian, a member of that movement, explicitly links possession with ritual occasions. He describes visions occurring during the community's weekly rites and of one particularly proficient prophet he emphasizes that her messages arose in the context of singing hymns, preaching, prayers, and scripture reading (*An*. IX, 4 a). Here again, his emphasis on those proto-orthodox activities may well have an apologetic purpose but they link the ASC to collective ritual occasions. Similarly, the popular second-century text, Shepherd of Hermas, places possession by the divine spirit in the context of collective prayer. So, for example, Command 11 claims that the prayers of the gathered faithful are able to strike false prophets mute but, by contrast, a righteous participant who is seated in the midst of the praying community will be filled with 'the blessed spirit' by the 'holy messenger/angel of God' (Herm. Mand. Book 2, Command 11).

More often in discussions of Christian origins the category of spirit possession has been reserved for the negative form with its attendant exorcisms. From their earliest appearance in the Gospels, stories of exorcism were already shaped to reflect cosmological interests of their authors, including Jesus's control over spirits. However, there is little reason to doubt that Jesus was widely viewed as an exorcist. The tradition even extends this activity to the first generation of followers (Mark 3:13–15; Matt. 10:1; Mark 6:7–13; Matt. 10:9–11; Luke 9:1–5). Whichever additional factors may have informed experiences of spirit possession (including psychosis), they are also mediated by changes in the consciousness of the possessed person. Anthropological studies suggest that exorcists, likewise, sometimes employ alterations in their modes of consciousness as part of their therapeutic intervention. The Gospels preserve early sayings that support the idea that Jesus was no exception: in particular, the accusation that the secret to Jesus's exorcistic success arises from his own possession by the demon Beelzebul, including, in the Markan version, the claim that Jesus was out of his mind (*exestē*; Mark 3:21–27; cf. Matt. 12:22–8; Luke 11:14–23).

The therapeutic intervention between an exorcist and a possessed person fits the pattern of ritual competence developed by McCauley and Lawson (2002). The exorcists drive the performance of the ritual and thus function as the *agents* acting for the benefit of the demon-possessed *patients*. However, somewhat distinctively, the ritual of exorcism proceeds as a contest between two sets of Culturally Postulated Superhuman beings (CPSs), as the model describes them. The exorcist channels the superior CPS in order to expel the weaker—at least when the exorcism works. The *patient* in this ritual is largely the passive locus of the ritual. Actions such as apotropaic prayer (Mark 9:28–9), naming magic, and the embodiment of supernatural presence are the sorts of instruments through which the power of the god expels lesser spirits from their control of the patient. Belief in multiple supernatural beings underlies many of the debates that attended spirit possession practices and exorcisms in early Christian and Jewish communities. Notably ancient groups were not debating whether spirit possession was possible

or whether ritual acts of receiving or expelling spirits were efficacious; rather they battled over which spirit was at work on which side of the encounter.

Practices of Paul and the Assemblies

The letters associated with Paul preserve the earliest evidence for ecstatic practices in Christian origins. Furthermore, both the letters and Acts of the Apostles suggest that these phenomena provided some justification for the rise of the new movement. Of the extant letters to these early assemblies, the Corinthian correspondence offers the most varied evidence of ecstatic practices within a ritual context. Describing the gatherings of the whole assembly in the context of prayer and singing, Paul discusses two types of spirit possession that produce prophecy and glossolalia respectively. The letter further reflects the group's sense that the personality of the person is displaced in the act of glossolalia, in particular, because glossolalists do not speak with their minds (1 Cor. 14:14–15)—in other words, not within a normal mode of consciousness. The same passage declares that singing can likewise be conducted apart from one's mind.

Elsewhere Paul describes even prayer as an act of a focused mode of consciousness: 'the spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how we ought to pray but the spirit takes part with us in our weakness with groans too deep for words' (Rom. 8:26–7). Both the whole of creation and the gathered community are described as groaning together with the spirit (Rom. 8:22). Together these details are suggestive of a somewhat noisy and actively participatory environment for ritual acts like prayer. The group practice of sublinguistic prayer and the emphasis on emotion in this passage indicate a ritual context that draws on a discrete form of consciousness, distinct from the recitation of petitionary or apotropaic prayer forms that are otherwise common (Shantz 2009: 127–31). As outlined below, ecstatic practices like these, even in their less extraordinary forms, helped to create conditions for the formation of a new movement.

Physiological and Neurological Capacity of Ritual

Given the embodied character of cognition, it is clear that we know *through* our bodies, not merely our brains. To make the point more clearly, we might say that thinking is a product of the coordinated and inseparable character of body-mind (see Klocová and Geertz, Chapter 5 in this volume). Thus, as many entries in this volume argue, rituals are not merely means to symbolize ideas or to communicate authorized teachings, but the physical enactment that comprises ritual is also rightly described as generating cognitive

and social effects. These effects include the amplification of affect across a social group and even some coordination among participants of basic biological functions. Émile Durkheim (1965 [1912]) famously coined the term *collective effervesence* to capture some of the features that arise across groups and he hypothesized that these experiences increased social cohesion.

Such biological salience depends on a robust neurological apparatus attuned to social cues and shared by humans, in part, with other primates. For example, we regularly engage in a range of unconscious mimicry behaviours as we pick up and replicate the gestures, facial expressions, and postures of those with whom we interact. Often, of course, rituals mandate coordinated behaviours among participants. Indeed, developments like collective ritual are possible because they draw on 'interlocking biological, psychological, and cultural innovations that enable large human groups to stay together and act in a coordinated fashion' (Haidt et al. 2010: 139). The discovery of so-called mirror neurons in macaque monkeys (Di Pellegrino et al. 1992; Caspers et al. 2010) and the study of their functioning in human subjects (Iacoboni 2009) demonstrate the close neural relationship between performing an action *and* watching someone else perform it. Specific sets of brain cells respond identically in both cases. Similarly, as a species, humans are extraordinarily sensitive to emotional cues in others and likely to feel in coordination with others (Schjoedt et al. 2009).

However, in distinction from even our closest primate relations, human brains are proportionately larger and use a higher percentage of our overall resources. In evolutionary terms, the cost to the species in energy must have purchased some related benefit in return. Most evolutionary theorists agree that part of the benefit is a better means to handle the complexities of larger social groups—collectives that in turn enhance the chance of survival. Thus, the so-called Social Brain Hypothesis is widely accepted as one, if not the singular, likely reason for our relatively large skulls and our success as a species. Our ability to function in larger, more complex social groupings has provided advantages that allowed our distant ancestors to succeed against stronger and faster competition. Rituals capitalize on these capacities by coordinating action and even emotion within a group. In so doing they tend to applify embodied effects and, hence, to facilitate other modes of consciousness.

Ritual and Synchrony

Studies of Synchrony

Synchrony is the general category for the coordination of biological and affective functions among individuals. Most obviously, some rituals synchronize movements and speech among participants through simple acts like standing or sitting together, but also more robust acts like singing, recitation in unison, call and response, and dancing or rhythmic movement. Perhaps more powerfully, the mutual influence of participants intensifies and constrains less visible phenomena like affect,

attention, and even in some cases the synchronization of something as fundamental as heart rates.

A number of studies have tested the significance of synchronized ritualistic action and group affiliation under controlled conditions. For example, a series of experiments conducted at Stanford University tested the coordination of movement and vocalization in artificially controlled conditions, and subsequent degrees of cooperation among the subjects. The results demonstrated that unrelated subjects who sang/chanted and or moved synchronously showed significantly greater levels of cooperation following the act, even when that cooperation came at personal cost to the subject and even when the coordinated behaviour was meaningless arm movements or repetition of nonsense syllables (Wiltermuth and Heath 2009).

A second study is even more interesting because it explored synchrony in a natural, rather than a laboratory, setting: a fire-walking ritual in the small village of San Pedro Manrique, in northern Spain. The fire-walking is an annual ritual performed at midnight when the summer solstice peaks. The event is held in a large amphitheatre erected to accommodate the ritual and capable of holding 3,000 spectators. After a procession through the town square, the walkers enter the crowded theatre, dance around the coals (prepared with over 2 tons of oak wood and after four hours of burning) and then take turns walking across the coals, usually carrying someone on their back (Konvalinka et al. 2011: 8514). Ivana Konvalinka and colleagues placed video cameras around the amphitheatre and secured the cooperation of some of the walkers and spectators to wear a heart monitor both before and during the ritual. The data they collected showed 'striking qualitative similarities during the ritual between the heart rates of fire-walkers and heart rates of relatives and friends' (2011: 8515), even to the point of 'fine-grained commonalities of arousal patterns across the entire ritual', not merely the fire-walking portion (2011: 8517). In fact, the effect works at two degrees of separation since related onlookers shared bodily arousal patterns not only with the walker to whom they were most closely connected, but with all the fire-walkers. Because there was no physical contact between the walkers and the synchronized spectators, the structure of ritual itself accounts for the synchrony among active and passive participants.

These studies and others are suggestive of the ways that ritual can structure not merely parallel behaviour, but also shared—and hence amplified—biological and affective experience. The spread of shared experience across a group accounts for phenomena like acts of mob violence and group elation.

Examples from Early Christianity

Among those early Christian practices most likely to produce synchrony, music is one of the most reliable (see Weimer, Chapter 15 in this volume). From the earliest evidence in the fledgling assemblies of Christ followers (e.g. 1 Cor. 14:26; Phil. 2:5–11) to the second-century battles about which music is legitimate, the origins of the movement were set to song, especially singing within a broader ritual context. Scattered comments show

that early Christian writers were aware of the power of music to stimulate heightened emotion and to generate perception of collective experience. Some of these comments are metaphorical. For example, Ignatius hints at the capacity of singing to generate synchrony when he compares the ideal community to members of a choir, singing in coordinated in unison (*en homonoia*, Ign. *Eph*. 4, 2). Other authors reflect explicitly on the power of group singing to control attention and feeling. For example, in Book 10 of *Confessions* Augustine signals the power of music in several ways: he writes of the delights of the ear (*voluptates arium*), uses a metaphor of flame, speaks of souls being kindled to religious sensibility, and warns of the ability of singing to entangle (*inplicaverant*) him in the pleasure of bodily sensation at the expense of the mind (10, xxxiii). These concerns are not unwarranted because melody and lyrics both have the potential to stimulate emotional connections and over time songs can become repositories of such associations. When singing is a collective act, these effects are kindled and intensified across the group.

Within the Pauline assemblies, glossolalia (see above) is another significant example of ritual synchrony. Like emotion, glossolalia appears to be 'contagious' in that it can be driven by group practice and especially by a socially appealing leader (Goodman 1972: 60). Although it is vocalized, it is not a language, for it follows none of the patterning necessary to structure communication. Indeed, while Acts includes a story of people spontaneously—again in a situation of collective effervescence—speaking known languages under the influence of the holy spirit (Acts 2:1–13), the Pauline letters make no such claim. (Nonetheless Paul believes that one can be divinely inspired to interpret it; see 1 Cor. 14:13.) Instead, this speaking is understood to be inspired and therefore beyond the full control of the speakers. In short, it is another example of the ritual inducement of ASC.

Religious Ecstasy as a Catalyst for Social Change

In 1968, a group of anthropologists led by Erika Bourguignon gleaned significant evidence for the relationship between ritual ecstasy and social change. In their study of available worldwide data about socially supported uses of ASCs, they noted that the majority of the world's (sub)cultures supported at least one socially acknowledged ritual practice of ASC (Bourguignon 1968, later supplemented by Winkelman 1992). Furthermore, as mentioned, the data showed that such ASC practices regularly coincided with periods of socially significant change, frequently appearing in times of crisis that presented challenges to the well-being of a group or some portion of it. Later, Bourguignon hypothesized that 'altered states in general and, perhaps, possession trance in particular represent potentially important and dramatic instruments of social

power and, thus, of social change' (1976: 43). Little exploration has followed about just why this should be so, but the next two sections outline some likely hypotheses.

Ineffability and the Exegetical Impulse

Relatively early in Christian history much of ritual life was tamed: the central meal was quickly fixed into a weekly practice with set forms, lectionaries were established for the orderly reading of sacred texts, prayers and creeds were formalized and repeated, and the fairly mild initiation rite of baptism was fixed. As Harvey Whitehouse has argued (2000; 2004), these routinized practices provide the means of controlling meaning and generating replicable standards of orthodoxy and practice across geographical distances. Such systematizing and regulation were assisted by the imperial infrastructure when, in the fourth century, Christianity was institutionalized as the religion of the Roman Empire.

By contrast, the sort of ritual practices that involve ASC tend to resist routinization and, instead, to generate 'spontaneous exegetical reflection' (Whitehouse 2004). This fact is suggestive of a number of connections. First, ecstatic events are frequently described as simultaneously ineffable and yet meaningful. That subjective sense of significance drives a desire to continue to reflect on the meaning and implications of the event in order to put words to sensations and perceptions.

Related to the generation of meaning, some modes of consciousness are actually productive of insight and new concepts because they seem to bypass the routine heuristics that typically limit cognition to a set of generally useful and sufficiently accurate patterns. In contrast, the integration of new and complex sets of information often cannot be accomplished adequately by force of thought. ASCs function in a different way. For example, when, just as we are drift off to sleep, we are suddenly jolted into attention by the solution to a problem we were working on all day, at that moment we have experienced some of the capacity of other modes of consciousness. In part, for this reason, ASCs are valued in many communities and cultivated by religious specialists on behalf of the community.

Second, as mentioned, intense emotional states are typically constitutive of ecstatic experiences. Thus, some ASCs are distinct in their ability to generate both the affective drive and the cognitive material necessary for change. Such events are popularly described as conversions because of their association with motivated behavioural change. In any case, emotionally integrated ideas provide the motivation for change that is often missing in didactic or authoritarian movements (Thagard and Nerb 2006). Even when only a select few have experienced the effects of ASC, the practitioners' affective integration makes their presentation of ideas more appealing and convincing. They are more effective communicators as a result. Obviously brain function is implicated in these phenomena (e.g. McNamara 2009: 59–130), even if the precise mechanisms are yet to be fully identified.

Ecstasy and Group Formation

A number of features of religious ecstasy are immediately relevant to the group and its cohesion. The first of these is the capacity of ASCs to signal group commitment. Signalling theory is based on evolutionary anthropology and specifically on certain characteristics of non-human animals. One example is the capacity of the colourful plumage of some birds to attract potential mates. That plumage demonstrates reproductive fitness because the bird that is capable of producing an abundance of feathers and an intensity of colour evidently enjoys a good state of overall health and access to resources. So while fertile females cannot see a male's food sources, the feathers serve as an 'honest signal' of those conditions. In short, the mating display signals useful information that might otherwise remain invisible. Similarly, antelopes signal their survival fitness through stotting behaviour, i.e. leaping upwards with all four legs; however, in this case they are signalling not to their own herd, but to potential predators. The stotting signals that the antelope would be difficult to chase down and, hence, not worth the effort. Such oblique forms of communication are effective because they are too costly to the animal to be counterfeit and, thus, signal useful information in trustworthy or 'honest' ways.

The principle of honest signalling has been applied to costly or hard-to-fake *ritual practices* as well. One of the problems faced by our ancient ancestors as they formed groups was the issue of free-riders, or group members who enjoy the benefits provided by a group without contributing sufficiently to the related costs of the collective. Difficult rituals are one way to control for such free-loaders. I am unlikely to selfishly join a community that requires me to pierce my flesh with sharpened sticks or sojourn alone in the wilderness as my means of initiation. Likewise, some rituals require such a strong identification with the values or relationships of the community that they provide a hard-to-fake signal of commitment. Glossolalia in particular could serve such a function since it requires a level of disinhibition in order to achieve the necessary mode of consciousness.

Hand in glove with the social signal is its collective effect. The ritual stimulation of ASC is frequently a group phenomenon. In contexts of colonization and the relative chaos of ancient urban conditions, collective elation might mitigate unsettling effects. Certainly, ASCs help to generate distinctive and pleasurable shared experience that can be foundational to a new movement. In his letters, Paul regularly reminds the assemblies of their reception of the spirit when they were founded (e.g. 1 Cor. 2:1–5; Gal. 3:1–5; 1 Thess. 1:4–5) or the 'signs and wonders' he performed in their presence (Rom. 15:19; 2 Cor. 12:12). Thus, although ecstatic rituals are not a persistent part of Christianity through time and place, for the reasons discussed here, they may have been indispensable to its origins.

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CHAPTER 28

RITUAL AND EMERGING CHURCH HIERARCHY

SUSAN E. HYLEN

Introduction

Tradition and scholarship have often assumed that early Christian ritual authority coincided with church office. The limitation of sacramental rituals to priests in many modern traditions created the expectation that ritual specialists were ministers consecrated for precisely that role. This assumption persisted despite the fact that early Greek-speaking Christians did not use their culture's word for 'priest' to identify their officers or ritual specialists (Bradshaw 2002: 201).

What is more, scholarly approaches have often looked for or assumed a smooth development of ritual practice from the time of Jesus to the ritual forms of late antiquity. Some historians sought a single original ritual practice beneath all the textual evidence. This effort has occurred in spite of variations in ritual forms and actors.

Ritual theory offers a lens through which scholars may reorient the study of ancient ritual practices and church offices. Ritual theory requires no *Ur*-ritual nor smooth development of practices. Instead, it explores questions of ritual authority through the analysis of ritual actions and the ways rituals imply or assert hierarchical relationships between participants. Ritual theory looks for claims or actions that authorize a ritual specialist or attribute special powers to that actor. Using ritual theory, one may evaluate the power that is both ceded and assumed in ritual action and understand descriptions of ancient rituals in a new light.

It is likely that ritual played some role in the emergence of hierarchies in Christian circles. But there should not be a foregone conclusion regarding which rituals were the most important, who performed them, or how they intersected with each other. Indeed, forms of social power other than ritual may also have influenced the emergence of church offices. The task of this chapter is not to tell a history of the development of Christian offices through ritual but to re-read primary sources looking for varieties of

ritualized activity to ask how rituals construed power relationships and how or if they were related to church offices (see also Schwiebert 2008: 15).

A longer treatment of this topic would study all the ritual forms for which we have evidence in early Christianity. Such a study might explore prophecy, healing, speaking in tongues, forgiveness of sins, Eucharistic meals, love feasts, and baptism, including baptism of the dead. From such a study one might begin to understand the various ritual roles in the church and how or if they came to overlap and to correspond with particular offices. However, the evidence of such ritual is sparse, especially in the first and second centuries, and it does not always identify the actions performed or attribute them to an individual, office-holding ritual actor.

This modest study will treat only evidence for baptism and meal rituals. In doing so, it risks repeating the mistake of giving undue attention to these practices. Yet because these rituals have been so important to previous studies of emerging hierarchy, it is also important to reassess this familiar material. I begin by using ritual theory to identify hierarchical relationships conveyed through baptism and meal rituals. Yet the majority of the chapter analyses who and how many people shared these roles, and their connection (if any) to named offices. To preview, I argue that there were hierarchies produced in the practice of early church rituals, but they were not clearly tied to the offices that we associate them with. The chapter concludes by identifying other sources of hierarchical authority that contributed to and complicated the emergence of church offices.

Ritual and the Production of Hierarchy

Ritualized action contributes to the production of hierarchy by suggesting an outside source that authorizes the ritual. By taking up a standardized sequence of action, a performer enacts a role that seems to come from outside himself or herself. As Roy Rappaport argued, 'Since to perform a liturgical order, which is by definition a relatively *invariant* sequence of acts and utterances *encoded by someone other* than the performer himself, is to *conform* to it, authority or directive is *intrinsic* to liturgical order' (1979: 192, emphasis original). The relatively fixed nature of ritual points to an authority beyond the performers and suggests that they act on behalf of a more powerful entity.

Some types of rituals associate the performer with divine authority. In 'special agent rituals', divine agency is channelled through a specialist, the ritual agent, who performs the ritual in order to effect some change on a ritual patient (McCauley and Lawson, 2002: 8–18). Acting on behalf of a divine or superhuman being, the ritual specialist becomes an agent of divine authority. Risto Uro has argued that Christian baptism is an example of such special agent rituals (2016: 85–7).

Participants in the ritual implicitly validate the hierarchy that emerges from the ritualized action. As Rappaport and others have noted, ritual does not point directly to any

individual's belief. Although participants believe many disparate things, the performance of a ritual embodies their acceptance of its hierarchy:

> Liturgical orders are public, and participation in them constitutes a public acceptance of a public order, regardless of the private state of belief. Acceptance is, thus, a fundamental social act, and it forms a basis for public orders, which unknowable and volatile belief or conviction cannot. (Rappaport 1979: 194)

Or, as Pierre Bourdieu wrote, 'Practical belief is not a "state of mind", still less a kind of arbitrary adherence to a set of instituted dogmas and doctrines ("beliefs"), but rather a state of the body' (1990: 68). Ritual actions embody hierarchical social relations.

The sequence of actions within a ritual may point towards the hierarchy that the ritual enacts. 'When the properties and movements of the body are socially qualified, the most fundamental social choices are naturalized and the body, with its properties and its movements, is constituted as an analogical operator establishing all kinds of practical equivalences among the different divisions of the social world' (Bourdieu 1990: 71). Lowering the head or the eyes is often a sign of humility or modesty. Likewise, kneeling or prostration and looking up or standing up 'symbolize relations of domination' (Bourdieu 1990: 72). The postures of ritual actors can display their social hierarchies.

The texts that point us to early Christian rituals are limited in scope but nevertheless give some clues to the hierarchical relationships that were likely produced and reflected in the rituals. Baptism, for example, points to a ritual specialist, the 'one who baptizes' (Greek, *baptizōn*, e.g. Did. 7.4), and a ritual patient 'the one who is baptized' (*baptizomenos*). One acts upon the other to achieve the desired effects of the ritual (see DeMaris, Chapter 22 in this volume).

The ritual specialist immersed the participant in water. The action with water varied somewhat across these texts, with some making room for sprinkling or pouring of water depending on the source available. But many sources suggest immersion. Specifically, the patient 'goes down' into the water and 'comes up' out of the water (e.g. Barn. 11.11; Hermas Sim. 93). The down/up motion suggests the patient momentarily took a lower position than the specialist, during which the patient's status changed.

The early writings give fewer signals of the precise physical actions or positions of participants of ritual meals. Justin Martyr identified a presider, 'one who stands before' (*ho proestōtes*) others, who prayed and broke bread (*1 Apol.* 65.3). The physical act of standing before others placed the specialist in a position of relative power vis-à-vis the other participants. The position assumed that person had some standing to act on behalf of others.

Ritual theory, then, leads us to expect early Christian rituals to be accompanied by hierarchy. Some hierarchy emerges in any ritual with a ritual specialist. However,

not all ritual specialists have the same power, and the power varies according to the nature of the ritual and the cultural and historical expectations for the ritualized actions.

Baptism

Ritual theory leads us to expect a hierarchical relationship between the one baptizing and the one being baptized. However, this does not imply that the role was limited to a few persons, or that ritual actors held a particular office. Questions about the authority of the ritual specialist are present in many of the earliest Christian texts about baptism. These texts reinforce the perception that many people baptized others.

The quarrels Paul reported among the Corinthians suggest that some attributed status to the one who baptized them. In 1 Corinthians, Paul addressed quarrels reported to him: 'What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul", or "I belong to Apollos", or "I belong to Cephas", or "I belong to Christ" ' (1 Cor. 1:12; NRSV). He went on to suggest that 'belonging' referred to the relationship of the baptized to the one baptizing:

> Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) (1 Cor. 1:13–16)

Some of the Corinthians were jockeying for status on the basis of their baptizer. Paul's response instructed them not to. But the idea that one could claim, 'I was baptized by Paul' as a status marker underscores the ritual authority of the one baptizing.

Paul's words suggest that the ritual actor both was and was not important. The authority inherent in baptism comes through in the words 'I baptized [them]', which positioned Paul as the ritual specialist whose action was required for the 'them' to transition to a new religious status through baptism. Yet Paul implied that the identity of the ritual specialist was not important: 'What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each' (1 Cor. 3:5). The one who baptized carried an apparent ritual authority, but one Paul also sought to undercut.

The Gospels contained similar kinds of ambiguities about the authority of the one baptizing. John the Baptist was the ritual specialist who baptized others, including Jesus, but the Gospels all insisted that Jesus' authority was nonetheless greater than John's. Mark and Luke implied that Jesus' future baptism was greater than John's water baptism. John the Baptist said, 'I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit' (Mark 1:8). Matthew added a story claiming the action should be reversed: 'John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented' (Matt. 3:14–15). John's Gospel stopped short

of narrating Jesus' baptism and focused instead on John's testimony that the Spirit remained on Jesus (John 1:32). In various ways, the Gospel writers expressed discomfort over John's apparent ritual authority over Jesus. They suggested that baptism carried an implicit hierarchy that was not entirely appropriate in the case of John and Jesus.

Yet John's authority to baptize was also important to the story. Many people went to be baptized *by John*—including Jesus (Matt. 3:13; cf. Luke 3:7) (Uro 2016: 88). John's special status was confirmed by the descriptions of his dress and prophetic speech (e.g. Matt. 3:1–12). His teaching about repentance was central to the meaning of his baptism, and his identity as a prophetic and ascetic figure attributed a particular kind of authority to him.

John's Gospel alone suggested that, like John the Baptist, Jesus made disciples through baptism. The Gospel presented their actions in parallel: 'After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he spent some time there with them and baptized. John also was baptizing at Aenon …' (John 3:22–3). The activity became another opportunity for John to testify to Jesus' higher status: 'He must increase, but I must decrease' (John 3:30). The Gospel asserted that Jesus both did and did not baptize. 'Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, "Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John"—although it was not Jesus himself but the disciples who baptized' (John 4:1–2). The author first attributed the act of baptizing to Jesus (John 3:22; 4:1) and then corrected the impression (John 4:2). The retraction created a connection between the disciples' authority to baptize and Jesus' baptism. They performed the action that was attributed to him. The activity of baptism seems important here, but the identity of the ritual specialist is not. Disciples baptized disciples, and the action was attributed to Jesus.

Many of the non-canonical texts of the first and second centuries also underscored the importance of baptism without giving any indication of who the ritual specialist was. Many writings reiterated the importance of baptism—or 'receiving the seal' as it was often called (see Ferguson 2009). At the same time, these texts rarely mentioned the person performing the baptism, their qualifications, or their office. When the baptizer was mentioned, their specific identify was often left open.

For example, in the Didache, instructions to baptize were stated as if any Christian might be responsible for baptism. 'With respect to baptism, [you (pl.)] baptize as follows: Having said all these things in advance, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, in running water' (Did. 7.1 [LCL Ehrman]). The instructions switched to a singular 'you' at this point in a discussion regarding the water available in varying circumstances (cf. Milavec 2003: 245–6). They ended with a statement that 'both the one baptizing and the one being baptized should fast before the baptism, along with some others if they can' (Did. 7.4). The directions continued to leave open the identity of the baptizer, referring to that person as 'the one baptizing'. The language suggests that a variety of people may have functioned as the ritual specialist in baptism.

The Didache later instructed the same plural 'you' to elect bishops and deacons, but did not indicate that the duties of either office included baptism, let alone an exclusive right to baptize. Some scholars have read officers back into the earlier chapters,

imagining the 'one who baptizes' as an officer of the church (e.g. Jefford 1989: 126–7). But the grammatical sense of the Didache points to a social practice in which a variety of Christians engaged in ritual as 'the one baptizing' (cf. Milavec 2003: 76, 286, 582; Rordorf 1986: 178).

Justin Martyr, writing in mid-second century, similarly indicated openness in the identity of the ritual specialist in baptism:

> Those who are convinced and believe … are taught in prayer and fasting to ask God to forgive their past sins … Then we lead them to a place where there is water, and they are regenerated in the same manner in which we ourselves were regenerated. (*1 Apol*. 61; Falls 1948)

Justin never specified the identity of the ritual specialist in this Christian 'washing'. Later in the same passage, he noted the Eucharist was led by 'one who presided' as well as deacons who served (see below). Yet Justin never implied that the one who presided or the deacons had a specific role in baptism.

Two sources from the first two centuries complicate this picture of the 'one who baptized'. The Acts of Paul is a second-century work narrating the story of Thecla, a disciple of Paul, who was persecuted because of her faith. Following her first trial, Thecla found Paul and requested baptism: 'Only give me the seal in Christ and no temptation will seize me.' And Paul said, 'Thecla, persevere, and you will receive the water' (Acts Paul 25.6–9; author's translation). Thecla experienced other trials and then received the water in a pool in the arena amidst the beasts. After praying, 'she said "Now is the time for me to be washed." And she threw herself in, saying "In the name of Jesus Christ, I baptize myself on the last day" ' (Acts Paul 34). Thecla acted as the ritual agent of her own baptism. Although unusual, this part of her story apparently caused no consternation among early readers. Devotion to Thecla was widespread in antiquity, and her baptism was retold without any suggestion of impropriety (see Davis 2001; Hylen 2015: Chapter 5). Tertullian, a lone voice critical of the work, spoke out against the use of the text to support women baptizing others, but even he did not invalidate Thecla's baptism (Tertullian, *Bapt*. 17). Thecla's story suggests that while baptism by another was the norm, the efficacy of the ritual did not hinge on the identity of the one baptizing.

The remaining piece of evidence regarding baptism is more in line with modern readers' expectations that a church official should baptize. Ignatius's letters repeatedly urged Christians to respect their bishops. (At the time, bishops were local leaders of a church rather than the regional figures they came to be.) Ignatius was concerned about unity among Christians, prompted by awareness of diverse teachings (e.g. Ign. *Trall*. 10). In the letter to Smyrna, he wrote, 'it is not permitted to have baptism or love feast without a bishop. But whatever he approves is acceptable to God' (Ign. *Smyrn*. 8 [LCL Ehrman]). Ignatius did not explicitly say that the bishop was the ritual specialist at baptism. It was possible that the baptized person's teacher performed that role with the bishop's approval. Although Paul responded to disagreement by asserting that the identity of the

baptizer was not important, Ignatius moved in the other direction to unify the practice of baptism under one bishop.

Meal Rituals

Ritual theory can help us to ask questions about how texts describe the authorization of the ritual, and who participates as a ritual specialist. The aim of this study is not to delineate one meal from another but to analyse the role of the ritual specialist in relation to other sources of authority. The early texts complicate the topic, however, because a number of factors make it difficult to decipher what the earliest rituals involved. The elements and acts of meal rituals were familiar parts of everyday life, so distinguishing a meal from a ritual can be difficult. To complicate matters, the word *eucharistia* in Greek means thanksgiving, so it can be difficult to distinguish the ritual from an act of prayer. In addition, more than one meal ritual may have been practised by early churches, including the *agapē* meal (or love feast) and the Eucharist. (See the discussions by Bradshaw 2002: Chapter 6; Schweibert 2008: Chapter 1.)

Paul's letter to the Corinthians provides the earliest glimpse into Christian meal rituals. He criticized the church for their ritual practice: 'When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk' (1 Cor. 11: 20–1). Paul went on to cite a tradition he received and passed on to the Corinthians about Jesus' last meal (1 Cor. 11: 23–6). He employed the tradition to motivate a change of behaviour from the pattern he criticized. It is not clear whether Paul was reciting part of the Lord's supper ritual, but the words are nonetheless interesting because, as noted above, tradition often plays an important role in ritualization. Paul's citation of the tradition suggests authorization by a source outside of Paul himself or the ritual actors in Corinth.

Paul also indicated a sequence of actions—taking bread, blessing, breaking, eating—that came to him from Jesus and to the Corinthians from Paul. The sequence suggests the ritualization of a common experience, eating a meal, in a way that it takes on new meaning. Later New Testament texts may reinforce the idea of ritualization by reflecting the same sequence of actions. The Synoptic Gospels portrayed Jesus' last meal with his disciples, in which he took, blessed, broke, and shared bread. Like Paul's letter, the stories may have pointed to a tradition that authorized this community's ritual meal.

Acts presented an idealized version of the church in which the 'breaking of bread' was a regular practice (Acts 2:42, 46). The text did not describe details of the ritual or who, if any one person, was responsible. The community's meeting 'to break bread' (Acts 20:7) may simply have suggested a shared meal. But Paul's sharing of bread in Acts 27 echoed Jesus's acts in the last supper because of the parallelism in his actions: 'he took bread; and giving thanks to God in the presence of all, he broke it and began to eat' (Acts 27:35). Although these actions were not entirely distinguishable from other meals, the shared

sequence of actions suggests the possibility of ritualized behaviour. If this sequence evoked the Lord's Supper for early readers of Acts, it was likely because Paul's ordered actions indicated the ritual.

Although the sequence of action suggests ritualization, the sources did not give a clear sense that a single ritual specialist had authority to perform the rite. Neither Paul's words nor the Gospels gave insight into who performed the Christian meal ritual. Paul's instructions were addressed to a corporate 'you' ('so then, wait for one another', 1 Cor. 11:33) or to each one (of you) (e.g. 'whosoever eats the bread … will be answerable', 1 Cor. 11:27). Paul did not mention a ritual specialist, let alone instruct the specialist to take charge of the situation in a particular way. The directions were aimed at the community and each one gathered to 'examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup' (1 Cor. 11:28). If the Gospel story of the last supper authorized a community's ritual, it did not specify who presided.

Non-canonical texts also send a variety of signals regarding practices of ritual meals. The Didache offered instructions 'with respect to the *eucharistia*' (Did. 9). The Didache pointed to some of the variety of early Christian ritual meals. The prayers were identified as *eucharistia*, suggesting the Lord's Supper. However, they differed from other sources in that the cup appeared before the bread and there was no mention of Jesus' death.

Like Paul, and like its earlier instructions on baptism, the Didache addressed a plural 'you': 'you shall give thanks as follows' (Did. 9.1). Although it is grammatically possible that the writer gave instructions for corporate, unison prayer, it is more likely that the 'you' plural imagined a ritual specialist whose identity was not specified. Whoever presided, then, prayed on behalf of a corporate 'we' ('we thank you …'), giving thanks to God for the cup and the bread. As Jonathan Schwiebert wrote, 'Someone (we do not know who) speaks for the whole assembly, and this assembly permits this, because this is at least a part of what the gathering means: they are there, among other reasons, to speak as one to God' (2015: 203).

The Didache's prayers pointed to the ritual's embodied acceptance of hierarchical relationships. Many scholars have suggested that the doxological ending to the eucharistic prayers was responsive (e.g. Niederwimmer 1998: 148–9; Schwiebert 2008: 66). Schwiebert wrote, 'With each doxological response, whether consciously or not, whether emotionally or not, individual participants in the ritual signal to one another (and to God) a fundamental agreement with the entire order implied by the ritual as such' (2008: 82). In taking on the part of respondents, the ritual participants implicitly reaffirmed the order established by the rite (see also Rappaport 1979: 195–7).

The Didache's instructions for ritual authorized a particular form of meal ritual. The words came from outside the ritual specialist, and thereby added authority to the rite. Yet Christians clearly had multiple forms of meal rituals at this point. If Paul's words authorized one meal ritual, these gave weight to a somewhat different one. In either case, the words pointed to the ritualization of the meal(s).

The Didache seems to have no expectation that the authority of various rituals was concentrated in a single individual. The work suggests a relationship between the

eucharistic meal and baptism. All participants in this rite were already baptized (Did. 9.5), including the ritual specialist. However, there was nothing to connect the one who baptized with the one who gave thanks.

As with baptism, Ignatius recommended a Eucharistic practice unified under the authority of the local bishop:

> And so be eager to celebrate just one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one cup that brings the unity of his blood, and one altar, as there is one bishop together with the presbytery and the deacons, my fellow slaves. Thus, whatever you do, do according to God. (Ign. *Phil*. 4)

Here Ignatius implied that multiple Eucharistic meals may be authorized by different leaders. Unity was displayed by having one meal authorized by the bishop. He did not specify that the bishop presided at the meal, however, although whoever did would have the authority of the office behind them. A similar idea was expressed in the letter to Smyrna: 'let that eucharist be considered valid that occurs under the bishop or the one to whom he entrusts it' (Ign. *Smyrn*. 8.1). This sentence suggests that the bishop might have presided at the Eucharist, but might also have chosen to entrust that job to another person whose role or office was not stated.

Justin Martyr's mention of the Eucharistic ritual was brief, but it gave a more detailed picture of the ritual roles of his community. The 'one who presided' at the meal had no specific title. Justin mentioned deacons as those who distributed the meal, but the ritual specialist was not described as a deacon. There was also a lector who read, followed by the teaching of the one presiding.

The Acts of Paul may also indicate a ritual meal, the love feast or *agapē*, following Thecla's first trial. 'There was *agapē pollē* …'—either 'great love' or a 'great love feast'—' … they had five loaves of bread and vegetables and water …' (25.1–3). The words may point only to the love and joy experienced at Thecla's release. Yet the food and the mention of Christ's deeds could have brought to mind a ritual meal. No ritual specialist was mentioned, yet those familiar with such a practice would likely have imagined the scene in line with their experiences.

Ritual and Other Sources of Authority

The early Christian baptismal and meal rituals suggest a leader with an authority perceived to come from outside himself or herself. They point to tradition in the process of being formulated and passed down, which added authority to the ritual actions. Yet these early texts were remarkably unconcerned with the identity of the ritual specialists. Someone clearly presided over these events, but their relationship to other offices or forms of authority was unstated.

Many of the texts cited above mentioned other forms of religious authority. Paul referred to a hierarchical order 'appointed by God': 'first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues' (1 Cor. 12:28). The Didache instructed the same group to whom the ritual instructions were given to elect bishops and deacons, and discussed apostles, prophets, and teachers (Did. 10.7, 11.3; 13.1–2). Justin Martyr mentioned deacons and lectors (*1 Apol.* 7.4–5), but not as those who baptized or presided at the meal. Ignatius went the farthest towards ritual authority of office by urging baptism, Eucharist, and *agapē* to take place under the bishop's authority (e.g. Ign. *Smyrn.* 8). But even so, the bishop was not necessarily the ritual specialist. Hierarchical forms of authority existed, sometimes with the same titles that became prominent and associated with the sacraments. But at that point ritual authority did not coincide with the duties of these offices.

Ritual authority emerged alongside other forms of authority in the early church. Prophecy, teaching, and stewardship of community resources were also important forms of authority. But the ritual roles were not neatly aligned with these other forms of authority. Because many texts associated baptism with the initiate's learning about the faith, it seems likely that teachers performed baptism for their students. Yet nothing suggests that there was a single teacher, or that baptism was the exclusive right of teachers.

Alongside these named forms of authority in early Christian texts, cultural practices of patronage likely shaped the church's views of leadership and authority. Paul identified Phoebe as a deacon of the church at Cenchreae and as a 'benefactor of many and of myself as well' (Rom. 16:1–2). His language suggested Phoebe was both an official representative of her church and a patron. Many religious, civic, and trade groups sought people like Phoebe who used both financial and social resources to assist the group. Patrons with higher status had greater resources in both categories, and so offices were both a reflection of and a contribution to the patron's status. Because many women had relatively high social status due to their ownership of property and social connections, women in the first and second centuries often held civic and religious offices, although not as often as their male peers (see Hemlrijk 2015; van Bremen 1996).

These social practices are reflected in the early Christian texts. The word *leiturgia*, which described the ministry of bishops and deacons of the Didache and 1 Clement, denoted public service, often undertaken at one's own expense. Although the duties of that ministry were unspecified, the word suggests the offices carried expectations shaped by practices of patronage. In addition, if the host at a meal served as the 'one presiding', then the patrons of house churches, whether male or female, likely served in this role as well (Osiek and MacDonald 2006: 144–219).

People who displayed virtue also accrued a kind of status that could translate into influence and office within the church. Martyrs were one example of this. Those who confessed their faith under the threat of death or loss of property exhibited piety and self-control, two of the chief virtues of the time. Ignatius's authority came not only from his office as a local bishop, but also from being under arrest. Thecla's ritual and teaching roles were also likely related to her virtue. Thecla's prayer that Tryphaena's deceased

daughter, Falconilla, be 'moved to the place of the righteous' (Acts Paul 28) prefigured the role that male and female martyrs came to play in the later church as confessors to whom others came for forgiveness of sin.

Some texts point to tensions between the roles, perhaps caused by the variety of forms of authority that were available. For example, the Didache followed its Eucharistic prayers with the instruction, 'permit the prophets to give thanks (*eucharistein*) as often as they wish' (Did. 10.7). Whoever presided in the prayers made room for one with prophetic authority to share the role. In addition, the Didache instructed its audience not to 'disregard' the elected bishops and deacons, 'for these are the ones who have found honour among you, along with the prophets and teachers' (Did. 15.2). The wording suggests a possible tension in the relative status of these roles. Ignatius's concern to unify local ritual under the bishop suggests that travelling teachers may have played ritual roles as well (Ign. *Eph*. 9; Ign. *Trall*. 6–7). Thus, there may have been multiple forms of status that qualified one to serve as a ritual specialist, which could lead to uncertainty regarding whose authority was greater.

In this early period, it does not seem possible to predict how the various forms of authority would coincide or which form would eventually dominate others. Christian ritual practices, in particular those we have come to associate with the priestly offices, were not described as exclusively priestly roles by the early sources. These writings conveyed a general lack of interest in the identity of the ritual specialists, and implied that many different persons led these practices.

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CHAPTER 29

RITUAL AND ORTHODOXY

PHEME PERKINS

Introduction

Discussions of ritual in early Christianity are largely devoted to textual evidence for such boundary-defining practices as baptism and celebration of the Lord's Supper. Liturgical studies focus on the varied forms of ritual praxis whose diverse origins make a linear genealogical account impossible (Bradshaw 2010). Considerable debate focuses on the 'theology of' baptism or Eucharist, which might serve to distinguish the Christian use of water or elements in the Christian meal from such culturally comparable activities as the prescribed banquets connected to other private associations. Deciding what counts as ritual has no easy solution (Rappaport 1999: 24–32; Grimes 2014: 185–210). As a general description, we will presume that ritual activity requires a defined group that assembles to engage in a social interaction that is based on a scripted tradition. This activity is partially orchestrated by expert individuals and is clearly distinct from the ordinary social interactions among participants. The calendar which determines when such activities are to occur also marks the distinction between ritual performances and ordinary life.

Evidence for associations provides little indication of how members understood their relationship to the divine benefactor in whose honour they gathered, offered sacrifice, sang hymns, and dined (Taussig 2009; Ascough, Harland, and Kloppenborg 2012). In the case of official public rituals, it is likely that whatever the origins of an established civic religious calendar and ritual, one or more story of its origins circulated among the participants (McGowan 2014: 233–9; Watt 2015: 35). Both the calendar, particularly the date for celebrating Easter, and the story of origins, connecting the Christian meal with the actions of Jesus, play a role in understanding the relationship of ritual to the emergence of Christian orthodoxy.

Pliny's letter to Trajan suggests that, in his eyes, Christian behaviour does not represent a cult of any civic significance. They 'assemble at dawn on a set day to sing a hymn to Christ as to a god'; 'bind themselves with an oath … to avoid theft, robbery, adultery,

and not to break their word, return money deposited with them when asked'; 'assemble again to eat food which was common and harmless'—a practice abandoned upon the imperial edict outlawing secret brotherhoods (*Ep. Tra*. 10.96).[1] If the meal could so easily be abandoned, then it would not appear to be a ritual action critical to Christian identity and belief as most theological and liturgical studies suggest (Klinghardt 1996; McGowan 1999a). Ritual's ties to ancestral origins or tradition which make acknowledging innovation problematic also suggest that if Pliny's report is correct, then believers in second-century Bithynia did not treat their meal's origins as founded by Jesus or necessary to salvation. Of course, those who joined Christian groups did not necessarily shed other identities which an individual possessed despite a baptismal formula in Gal. 3:26–8 that suggests otherwise (Barton 1992; Borgen 1996; Rebillard 2012: 34–55). Ignatius inveighs against those who abstain from the Eucharist (Ign. *Smyrn*. 6.2; Harland 2003).

The New Testament qualifications for leaders involve supervisory functions and teaching focused on ethical conduct (1 Tim. 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9). The praying and prophesying in early Christian gatherings (1 Cor. 11:2–16; 12:4–11) suggest that any Christian might become the conduit through which the Spirit breaks into communal life. Afterwards a prophet's visions or sayings of the Lord become part of the communal memory through repetition (Fentress and Wickham 1992: 47–51). Thus, we are left with two puzzles that are inadequately represented in our first-century evidence: how did ritual experts emerge from Christian groups, and how did the kind of expertise in doctrinal interpretation of texts typical of the school setting come to be connected with ritual activity?

Doctrine at the Margins of Ritual

Hearing a canonical text read and expounded in a ritual context enhances the authority of the text and/or speaker. Nehemiah 8:5–12 incorporates such ritual elements in reading out the Torah to the restored community in Jerusalem that involves a special time, 'the day is holy to the Lord', blessings, acclamations, and other gestures, followed by communal feasting. Justin Martyr reports that the weekly gathering of Christians on 'The Lord's Day' involved readings from the memoirs or the prophets; an address by the presider (ethical exhortation); and communal prayers, followed by the rite described (*1 Apol*. 67.3–8). The fixed order of actions indicates an established ritual pattern: (1) greet one another with a kiss; (2) presentation to the 'presider of the brothers' of the bread and cup of wine mixed with water; (3) prayer by the presider, 'sends up praise and glory to the Father of all through the name of his Son and of the holy Spirit, and he makes thanksgiving at length for being considered worthy of these things'; (4) people give their assent

[1] Unless otherwise noted, translations from ancient writings are by the author of this chapter.

with 'Amen'; (5) deacons distribute 'eucharistized bread and wine and water' to those present and 'carry it away' to those not present (*1 Apol*. 65.2–5; Bradshaw 2010: 46–52).

Private cult associations often fine those who miss the communal meal. Christians distributed bread from their ritual to absent members. Ritualized bread was not the only tie between individuals in these communities. Gifts to assist the poor were brought forward as offerings. The presider oversaw assistance to orphans, widows, those in need, prisoners, foreigners . . . 'and he is the protector of all in general who are in need' (*1 Apol*. 67.6–7). Lampe suggests that the 'presider' (*episcopos*) in each group was primarily concerned with the administrative tasks associated with this operation (2003: 397–400). Neither particular ritual knowledge nor that of a learned teacher were required for the 'presider' at the weekly assembly to give moral exhortation connected with the reading from the prophets or the 'memoirs' (gospels).

Other individuals gathered groups around them following either the school model of a philosophic teacher or that of the 'study or reading circle'. Questions of 'doctrine', textual interpretation, and authentic teaching constitute the core activities of such groups. But disputes over teaching between teachers and their followers or within reading circles over the meaning of texts do not imply divisions within the ritual group (Sterling 1999; Dunderberg 2004; Thomassen 2004). Excluding individuals whose teaching was suspect from association with larger circles of believers is a late second-century development (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl*. 5.24). A teacher, Valentinus, whose speculation would blossom in schools of gnostic teaching and ritual practice, remained within Christian circles in Rome during the mid-second century (Lampe 2003: 381–408).

The social position of textual experts had little to do with the ritual activities of the larger community. Ritual performance required a much less sophisticated ability to read, comment on, or produce texts than teaching. It may be no accident that ecclesial authorities from outside Rome, Polycarp and Irenaeus, were the ones who raised issues of authority and orthodoxy there. Irenaeus presents himself as authorized to do so because he stands in a succession derived from Polycarp. He claims to have heard that revered martyr as a young man (Behr 2013: 57–66). In reporting Polycarp's efforts to root out the heretical teachers, Marcion and Valentinus, during a visit to Rome, Eusebius repeats what Irenaeus said (*Haer*. 3.3.4; Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl*. 4.14). Both Polycarp and Irenaeus also became embroiled in affairs of the Roman churches in a matter tied to ritual—the date on which Easter was to be celebrated. This dispute may have been responsible for their presence in Rome. Once there, these outsiders gained prestige among their less-educated Roman counterparts by turning their textual and theological expertise on what had been considered marginal divisions between various teachers. The 'heretics' whom they seek to persuade Roman Christians to expel from fellowship are presented as far more dangerous than any private reading circle. As practitioners of ritual deviations, heretical teachers imperil the church's access to divine power.[2]

[2] Valentinus himself may not have been responsible for the theological systems which Irenaeus dismantles as contrary to Christian scripture and the canon of faith (see Markschies 1992). Valentinus is credited with both liturgical poems and sermons, which might themselves have had a ritual setting.

Early Christians in Ritual Communities

Shifting attention away from the competition between individual teachers for a literate minority to the broader spectrum of believers whose primary identification involved ritual activities suggests that the orthodoxy-versus-heresy debates were much less central to the lives of believers than most historians acknowledge. How Christians understood their rites remains a topic of ongoing debate. Anthropological models that treat baptism as an 'initiation' fail to incorporate the complex structures providing water in Romanized urban environments (DeMaris 2008: 36–56; see also DeMaris, Chapter 22 in this volume). Other comparisons contrast Christian use of water (and oil) in a rite only experienced once (Heb. 10:26–7) and the culturally more common ritualized washing as purification. The symbolic-ritual construction of early Christian sources holds that believers have entered a new zone of reality separate from the chaotic or even demonic powers operating in the world. This distinction is typically explained in theological terms as the tension between the new life in the Spirit, the 'already', and powers which continue to derail that project, a 'not yet' (for example, Gal. 3:21–4:7; Rom 7:1–8:38). In more exalted imagery, believers have become part of a body in which the divine Spirit is the animating principle and whose head, the risen Christ, is triumphantly enthroned over all cosmic powers (1 Cor. 12:1–27; Eph. 1:15–23).

The Spirit-Filled Body of Christ

The ritual efficacy of incorporation into this Spirit-filled body could be compromised. In two cases Paul requires actions to ward off the danger of divine retribution. In a third the holiness of the community is threatened. A man who has taken his father's wife, is subjected to a ritualized expulsion by being turned over to demonic forces (1 Cor. 5:1–5). Failure to respect the equality of all participants at the meal celebration of the Lord's Supper, conspicuous consumption by the rich, and embarrassment for the poor have led to divine judgement in the form of illness and death (1 Cor. 11:17–34; Theissen 1982). Exactly how the regulation, 'if someone is hungry, let him eat at home so that you do not suffer condemnation' (1 Cor. 11:34) corrects the infraction is unclear. Some private associations stipulated the amount of food to be provided by each participant. By the second century, a ritual that only involves the symbolic tokens of bread and wine no longer faces such problems of equity.

These examples highlight an ongoing form of boundary maintenance required to preserve the holiness of the community. Paul's use of comparable language in ranting against sexual relationships with a prostitute (1 Cor. 6:12–20) is more ambiguous. By assimilating the body of an individual believer to the Spirit-led communal body, the

prohibited sexual activity becomes another grave case of contaminating what has been sanctified by ritual incorporation into Christ.

Each item mentioned in 1 Corinthians could be viewed as precursor to more extensive debates in the second and third centuries. Does the 'only once' character of baptism mean that those excluded as a consequence of grave moral sinfulness after baptism or those who deny being Christians when persecuted have no possibility of returning? What relationship exists between the principal human agent in a ritual and its spiritual power? Is the ritually sustained 'body of Christ' localized in a particular community or group of churches linked by exchange of Eucharistic bread? Or is it, as the poetic language suggests, translocal?

Re-mapping the Cosmos

Metaphorical expansion of the 'body of Christ' from the dimensions of a local civic community to the cosmic scale typifies the cognitive element in ritual engagement with a supernatural agent, 'embodied inquiry into the character of what is' (Schilbrack 2004: 19). The heavenly re-mapping will take sensory form in the second half of the fourth century with the erection and decoration of buildings whose only use is for ritual celebration (Wills 2012). Disputes over who had rights to a particular space might be fought out on doctrinal grounds as in the well-known contest over the use of a basilica for the Easter celebrations in 386 CE between the 'orthodox' bishop of Milan, Ambrose, and the neo-Arians, favoured by the imperial family. Though Augustine trumpets Ambrose's victory as evidence for the truth of Nicene Christianity against Arian heretics, he admits that Ambrose still had to stage-manage a permanent claim to the space by a contrived discovery and translation to the basilica of the uncorrupted bodies of two martyrs (*Conf*. 9.7.15–16). This political theatre involving discovery of a hidden tomb, the miraculous preservation of the bodies, and an elaborate transfer to the new basilica, the site for the 'orthodox' celebration of the Easter mysteries that proclaimed Christ's victory over death, provided a more powerful divine confirmation of Nicene Christianity against Arian 'heretics' than any theological discourse.

Michael Peppard has reinterpreted the decorative programme of the pre-Constantinian house-church/baptistery from Dura-Europos (*c*.256). He points out the flaw in art history treatments of ritual spaces that divorce art from the ritual during which it was viewed.[3] Most text-centred interpreters substitute what appears to be the relevant biblical passage for the visual image on the walls (Peppard 2016: 31). Direct evidence for the ritual life of Christians is spotty. Augustine credited Ambrose with

[3] Artistic programmes directly associated with such ritual actions as baptism, anointing, or procession require a different interpretation than those simply intended for viewing. Given the fact that later mystical texts from Syria consist of reflections on biblical narratives against the backdrop of liturgical events, the art in the baptistery challenges modern scholars to imagine how these third-century believers imagined what occurred during baptism (Peppard 2016: 27–30).

introducing antiphonal chanting on the part of the congregation in the West,[4] but references to psalms, hymns, and songs in the New Testament suggest that music had always been part of early Christian worship (cf. Eph. 5:18–20; Col. 3:16; McGowan 2014: 111–15; see also Weimer, Chapter 15 in this volume).

Whether the literary pieces of prose poetry that scholars refer to as 'hymns' in the New Testament (e.g. John 1:1–18; Phil. 2:6–11; Col. 1:15–20) actually represent the performance texts remains undecided (McGowan 2014: 112). A small piece of archaeological evidence, P. Oxy. 1786 (late third century) includes musical notation of a hymn praising God. Its wording suggests some type of antiphonal performance (McGowan 2014: 121):

> . . . together all the esteemed ones of God . . .
> . . . Let them be silent. Let the shining stars not . . .
> . . . let the [rushings of winds, and springs] of all surging rivers [cease].
> While we sing
> Father and Son and Holy Spirit, let all the answering powers say
> 'Amen, Amen.'
> [always and glory to God,] the only giver of all good things, Amen.
> Amen.

These lines assume that cosmic powers respond to the congregational praises to God, Father, Son and Spirit. Though New Testament hymns (Phil. 2:6–11; Col. 1:15–20; John 1:1–18) are generally discussed as evidence for Christological beliefs, songs and hymns of praise 'to Christ as God' need not have focused attention on doctrine. Official hymn-singers are routinely associated with the imperial cult. For example, groups of singers from various cities performed at the temple to Augustus in Pergamum (Friesen 2001: 105–13; Burrell 2004: 17–22).

Ritual reconfiguration of the world plays a role in establishing communal identity. Paul's well-known lines, 'our citizenship is in heaven and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory . . .' (Phil. 3:20–1) are the climax of an attack on Judaizing Christian practice condemned as 'fleshly' and destined to pass away. To support that assertion, Paul proposes his own interpretation of the story about salvation. Ritual studies has shown that formal repetition of a founding story creates the shared memory that distinguishes insiders from outsiders. Such stories may be attached to specific ritual practices, and can even change over time (Grimes 2013: 124–61). More than one version may be associated with significant ritual events in the life of a community.

[4] See Augustine, *Conf.* ix, 7 (15) on Ambrose's congregation singing during the sit-in to prevent turning a basilica over to Arian Christians:

> At that time singing hymns and psalms according to the practice in eastern regions was instituted so that people would not become worn down by sadness. From then up to the present it has been retained by many—in fact practically all . . . of your congregations and by imitators in other parts of the world.

Connecting Ritual and Story

Ritual actions have priority over narratives associated with them. Paul's association of baptism with the death and resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 6:3–11) did not prevail everywhere in the early Church (Betz 1994). Jesus' own baptism as a moment of spiritual awakening, receiving the name 'Son of the Father', or baptism as putting off mortality provided equally plausible accounts of the baptismal rite but generate different soteriological doctrines (Ferguson 2009: 99–131). Similarly, Paul treats words spoken over bread and wine during the Christian meal as representative of what Jesus did (1 Cor. 11:23–6). That tradition appears in the narrative of Jesus' last meal with his followers in the synoptic gospels but not in John. Since variant formulaic words occur earlier in that gospel (John 6:51–8), scholars often appeal to divergent sources or the evangelist's theological agenda to explain why they do not occur in its Last Supper narrative. However, the communal memory associated with the meal may not always incorporate this tradition (McGowan 1999b). The Eucharistic prayers in Didache 9.1–4 do not include them (Audet 1959; Draper 2000). Instead, a metaphoric transfer of 'sacrifice' to the meal appears in the communal acknowledgement of sin: *having first confessed your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure* (Did. 14.1). But the meal itself was not yet understood to be a symbolic sacrifice reflecting the sacrificial interpretation of Jesus' death (McGowan 2012).

Rather than explain Didache's thanksgiving prayers as evidence for an *agape* meal already divorced from the sacramental commemoration of Jesus' death using bread and wine, one should acknowledge early Christian ritual pluralism. The Didache prayers recall Jesus, God's servant, as the source of knowledge, faith, and immortality in the kingdom whose members are gathered from the four corners of the world. Thanksgiving for 'the holy vine of David' over the cup reminds participants of their roots in the Jewish story. The concluding eschatological '*maran atha*' anticipates Jesus' second coming. Ritual reminders of a shared story shape perceptions of what it means to belong to the group. Treating the emergence of an official—or at least broadly shared—'four gospel canon' from a ritual perspective raises new questions. How are particular narratives either embedded in or being used to shape a communal memory? Have earlier, alternative stories been revised, pushed to the margins or even erased from communal memory? For example, in a bit of sarcasm, Irenaeus accuses Valentinian teachers of chopping up the beautiful mosaic of the Biblical narrative in the gospels and Acts to fashion a distorted and ugly account of God and the Saviour (*Haer*. 1.8). This invective represents the mental habits of a book-oriented elite, not the experience of those who assimilate their story through ritual celebrations which may connect with different points in a shared story.

From Innovations to Orthopraxis

Christian communities adapted language and gestures from diverse sources: Jewish prayer and sacred texts, the meal rituals of private associations, and, perhaps, hymns

honouring the emperor. When measured against the public celebrations of cultic sacrifice and feasting in honour of the city's gods, Christian praxis hardly resembles solemn, religious ritual (Markschies 2015: 116–89). Surviving prayer formulae suggest that Christians continued to improvise prayers of thanksgiving into the third century. These prayers incorporated some fixed formulae and gestures and typically shared common themes (Markschies 2015: 125–8, 158–9). How more fixed words, gestures, and other physical actions replaced this fluid diversity remains obscure. Christians did not live in families or larger social groups that were explicitly Christian. Until pressured by outsiders, they might not have prioritized membership in the Christian group over against other important social identifiers (Rebillard 2012: 34–5). In contrast to sources composed by the literate elite who were either professional teachers or respected Christian leaders, believers in the first to the third centuries were rather slightly Christianized (Markschies 2015: 49).

Ritual requires repetitive patterns of action and speech understood to be grounded in tradition and performed in a specially prepared setting. Appealing to the words of Jesus during a Jewish ritual meal provided a foundation for the weekly remembrance of the Lord's Supper. Justin Martyr describes the Thanksgiving as 'a word (*logos*) of prayer from the Lord' (*1 Apol.* 66.2). Once established as tradition, such ritual patterns could attach to theological reflection. Justin connected his theological emphasis on Christ as the Logos incarnate with the meal ritual by describing it as 'logos of prayer'. This expression did not figure in the Eucharistic prayer of other churches in mid-second-century Rome (Markschies 2015: 145).[5] Do such theological distinctions find their way into the consciousness of individuals not otherwise attached to the school-shaped habits of debate between teachers and their circles? Although the 'presider' in Justin's account is able to offer an exhortation based on readings from the prophets and memoirs of the apostles, this activity does require theological expertise. Though Irenaeus castigated a Roman presbyter Florinus as a devotee of Valentinian teachings (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.20), there is no evidence that Pope Victor dismissed him from the presbytery.

Theological Disputes and Ritual Practice

Would the theological disputes which produced divergent positions on canonical texts, their interpretation, and even new mythologies have required their practitioners to separate themselves from the ritual practice of ordinary believers? Not in all cases. Irenaeus' 'Against Gnosis Falsely So-called', commonly referred to as 'Against Heresies' exerts considerable effort to warn readers against being deceived by alleged forms of true or 'more spiritual' Christianity and frames the disputes as contests over the true teaching of the apostles attested in the received scriptures. For example, in discussing the Eucharist, he

[5] Whether or not the group which gathered in Justin's lodgings for instruction in his Christian philosophy was also an independent circle of worshippers remains unclear. In the Acts of Justin (3.3), he informs the urban prefect that during this stay in Rome he has participated in no other assembly (*seneleusis*) than that in his lodgings over the bath house (Minns and Parvis 2009: 259 n. 3).

diverges into the false teaching about God proposed by Marcion, Valentinus, and others (*Haer*. 4.18). This rhetorical move supports his innovative assumption that ritual efficacy and theological orthodoxy are tightly correlated.

Such an inference is contrary to a culturally accepted distinction between the formal requirements of ritual expertise or performance and the practices of textual interpretation and philosophical or theological speculation in a school setting. This rhetorical slight-of-hand raises suspicion. Have Irenaeus and other 'orthodox' apologists created the bizarre ritual innovations that 'heretical' teachers allegedly promoted? For example, Irenaeus charges Marcus with magical powers enabling him to seduce high-ranking women. Such powers are said to have been used in the invocation over the cup demonstrating the change of wine into the blood of the heavenly figure Grace. In addition, Marcus flatters female devotees by permitting them to offer prayers of Thanksgiving (*Haer*. 1.13,1–3; Förster 1999: 65). Given the freedom of liturgical prayer in the second century, Marcus could formulate the thanksgiving over the cup differently from Irenaeus or other presiders without alarming participants. Consequently, the words which Irenaeus attributes to Marcus must reflect his usual sarcastic imitations of opponents' views.

At the same time they do suggest what Christians generally expected in Eucharistic prayer: invocation of the Spirit and echoes of biblical language, 'May Grace who is before all things, who is beyond thought and description, fill your inner man and multiply in you her knowledge, sowing the mustard seed in good soil' (*Haer*. 13.2). 'Grace' is a name of the supreme entity 'Silence' in the Marcosian metaphysical system. However, ordinary believers might not discern anything amiss except the unusual practice of inviting certain elite women to participate in thanksgiving over the cup, if only the (male) presider spoke words of thanksgiving during the ritual meal in other Christian assemblies.

Ritual and the Dying Soul's Ascent

Peter Brown highlights the isomorphy between Manichaean and orthodox Christian rituals associated with the souls of the dead in the fourth century. Only the names for specific parts of the ritual differ. Actions involved making an offering of alms, the Eucharist and agape as 'in memory' of the deceased. The question for devotees was not how these ritual actions worked but whether they effectively conveyed the soul to a place of rest (*Kephalaion* 87, 115; Brown 2015: 49–53).

Speculative teaching about the soul's ascent past (hostile) heavenly powers is part of the teaching attributed to so-called 'gnostic' teachers. Irenaeus associates this 'redemption' of the dying with a series of ritual actions: pouring oil and water over the head of the dying along with prayers said to render the soul unassailable by the powers. Souls are reminded of words that they must recite (*Haer*. 1.21.5). Connections between the soul's ascent and words that must be spoken to the powers also appear in gnostic texts (e.g. 1 Apoc. Jas. 32:28–36:3; Gos. Mary 15:1–17:4). Did this speculation emerge

from the philosophical focus of Platonism on the soul's conversion to a grasp of ultimate reality only to be embodied in rituals connected with death later? Or was the ritual prior to its metaphysical justification? Augustine's loose connection between a peculiar dual mystical ascent shared with his mother days before her death and the memorialization of Monica at the altar suggests that a set of ritual actions and words were prior to doctrine (*Conf.* 9.10 [24–5)] and 13 [36]). It is in Augustine's rhetorical interest to divorce his new orthodox Christian self from his suspect Manichaean past. Therefore, he has transformed his mother into an intuitive philosopher in the weeks before her death and masked rituals associated with her death that could be confused with Manichaeism.

Valentinian sources paint a complex picture of ritual practice in which followers of particular teachers sometimes overlapped with the larger Christian community and sometimes enjoyed special rites limited to their own circles. A Roman presbyter might conduct liturgical celebrations for a group in which ordinary believers were the majority. As Markschies observes, the prayers in a poorly preserved liturgical manuscript considered to be from Valentinian circles show no peculiar features of speculative Valentinianism (NHC XI, 2; Markschies 2015: 126–7). The rituals described, anointing (40:1–9), baptism (40:30–41:38; 42:1–43:19), and Eucharist (43:20–38; 44:1–37), are part of ordinary Christian life. The ritual words appear to be formulated as prayers of the larger Christian community. These texts have been copied following a selection of Valentinian theology. Had they been discovered as separate fragments, these prayers would simply have been labelled as ritual prayers. Thus, from a ritual theory perspective, studies of early Christian ritual in the first four centuries should not be confined to authors recognized as 'orthodox'.

Valentinian Teachers and Sacramental Theology

Speculation about the nature and effectiveness of sacraments is a recurring topic among Valentinian teachers as the Gospel of Philip indicates (Schmid 2007). Anointing is superior to baptism, since it is the basis for the name 'Christ' and was passed from the Father to the Son to the apostles to believers (74:12–24). The cup over which the thanksgiving has been said is 'full of the Holy Spirit' and enables those who receive it to become the perfect human (75:14–25). That sacramental transformation does not require that Valentinians had replaced the ordinary Christian rites of anointing, baptism, and Eucharist. The 'bridal chamber' which serves as the culmination of the ritual process suggests an additional rite not shared with other Christians (Uro 2008: 470–5). Such a distinction between public or widely shared ritual actions and rites reserved for a limited group of initiates reflects the general pattern of 'mysteries' attached to deities whose cult played a major role in civic life, such as Artemis at Ephesus (Rogers 2012). Many Valentinian texts distinguish between 'psychics', other Christians, and 'pneumatics', members of their group, a distinction not necessarily reflected in contexts that involved both types.

Even teachers might represent different levels of expertise. Among Christian teachers Justin Martyr represents the type of a popular philosopher while Origen provided professional instruction. Similarly Valentinians fluctuate between the professional, speculative teachers like Ptolemy and those whose interests did not extend beyond the activities of a salon reading circle (Markschies 2015: 71). Surviving textual evidence reflects the habits of a literary elite. But many Valentinian practitioners likely had only superficial familiarity with the speculative mythologizing and its application to reading Scripture found there. For them, rituals culminating in the 'mystery' of marriage with the soul's heavenly counterpart are central. The tight connection between correct doctrine and ritual found in heresiologists likely originated as a response to Valentinian practice. Polemic distortions aside, Irenaeus had access to written sources and even oral information from within Valentinian circles. Clearly the differentiation between *pneumatikoi* and *psychikoi* did not correlate to a sectarian isolation from other Christians.

Some treatises composed by Valentinians might even be addressed to Christian readers unfamiliar with the more speculative theories concerning the structure of the divine realm, the emergence of the lower world, the nature of the Saviour's body, and the like. The Gospel of Truth, the Treatise on the Resurrection, and even Heracleon's commentary on John could be read in a circle of intellectually inclined Christians without interest in speculative Valentinian theology or participation in peculiarly Valentinian rituals. An intriguing piece, the Interpretation of Knowledge, part of the same collection as the Gospel of Truth, the Treatise on Resurrection, A Valentinian Exposition as well as the erudite Tripartite Tractate,[6] appeals for a church unity that incorporates such 'orthodox' Christian beliefs as the sacrificial death of Christ and a canon of four gospels and Paul. Van den Broek proposes that the Tripartite Tractate is addressed to an audience of Valentinian and non-Valentinian Christians led by Spirit-filled individuals (2013: 106–7).

If Valentinian teachers operated in mixed communities, then defining the boundaries of a Christian community as coinciding with an established 'orthodoxy' in teaching makes little sense. Two inscriptions that some scholars identify as Valentinian also reflect the ambiguity of communal boundaries: one a funerary inscription for a woman devotee; the second, apparently on the wall of a villa on the Via Latina (mid-second century), may have marked the place in which a group assembled for the agape meal.[7] Although some Valentinians practised a death ritual of the soul's ascent to reunion with its heavenly counterpart suggested by the funerary inscription,[8] sacramental

[6] As part of the collection that comprises Codices I, VII, and XI, the same scribe copied Treat. Res. in Codex I and Interp. Know. followed by *Val. Exp*. in Codex XI (Funk et al. 2010: 5). At this stage the three codices, were probably made for a monastic group, and intended to provide pedagogy in what is acknowledged as heterodoxy (p. 11).

[7] 'Fellow brothers, celebrate for me with torches, the baths of the bridal chambers. They hunger for banquets in our rooms, singing hymns to the Father and praising the Son. May there be in that place flowing of a single spring and of truth' (Thomassen 2006: 350–1).

[8] 'You, who did yearn for the paternal light, sister, spouse, my Sophe, anointed in the baths of Christ with everlasting, holy oil, hasten to gaze at the divine features of the aeons, the great angel of the great council (i.e. the Redeemer), the true Son; you entered the bridal chamber and deathless ascended to the bosom of the Father' (Rudolph 1983: 212; van den Broek, 2013: 104–6; for the entire inscription, see Snyder 2011).

theology in the Gospel of Philip associates realized eschatology with the ritual meal. The Eucharistic celebration clothes a soul with the garments of immortality. Thus, the Gospel of Philip shares a theological interpretation found in Irenaeus and even Justin Martyr, namely, that the bread has been transformed from its earthly reality to a spiritual one.[9] Valentinian groups probably exchanged Eucharistic bread with other congregations in Rome as evidence of unity among believers.

The target audience for such spiritual interpretation and ritual initiation comprised the literate elite, a small percentage of Rome's Christian population. The importance of that demographic for private associations which depend upon patrons explains the vigorous reaction spearheaded by Irenaeus. He forged new links between ritual expertise, the interpretation of a scriptural canon, and more rigidly drawn community boundaries in opposition to both the doctrine and praxis of groups associated with individual teachers.[10] This development marks a major shift in the relationship between ritual and officially sanctioned Christian teaching. Though myths often are associated with the rituals at the core of religious experience, theoretical reflection on the process was secondary.[11] Valentinian participants in a ritual with other Christians could have brought a spiritual understanding to these words and actions without appearing different from others.

Orthodox Teaching and Ritual Authority

Civic cults show considerable change over time in the modes of celebration as well as the key role played by elite benefactors and civic authorities in determining ritual practice (Rogers 2012: 9–22, 133–46).[12] Problems of ritual effectiveness and authority to both perform and interpret the accepted rites fuelled theological developments in the third

[9] 'For this reason he said, "One who does not eat my flesh . . ." (John 6:53). What does this mean? His flesh is the word and his blood is the Holy Spirit. Whoever has received these had food, drink and clothing' (Schmid 2007: 214). Schmid suggests Gos. Phil. represents a Valentinian response to the 'orthodox' views of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus (2007: 332–4).

[10] Lieu notes a similar ambiguity in Marcionite communities, which initially formed a school with no intention of creating a new worshipping community. Well into the fourth century whole villages in Syria might be identified as 'Marcionite' without their practice differing markedly from that of other Christians. They were martyred alongside Catholic Christians in comparable numbers (Lieu 2015: 387–97).

[11] Cf. Clement, *Exc.* 64: 'they enter the bridal chamber inside the Limit and achieve the vision of the Father, themselves become aeons' (van den Broek 2013: 106). He argues that scholars have overemphasized the school character of Valentinianism. Their charismatic teachers do not emphasize a doctrinal heritage traced back to Valentinus (2013: 164).

[12] Observing the participation of various wealthy families in funding the mysteries of Artemis at Ephesus, Rogers suggests that without the cultural framework of 'competitive euergetism' the mysteries would never have been celebrated (2012: 163–4).

century. Widespread concerns over the holiness of the community produced an emphasis on proper ritual performance. The Decian persecutions proscribing Christian ritual assemblies demonstrate a larger societal anxiety that Christian activities were not some mindless superstition but a direct offence to the gods.[13] The martyr-cult produced new forms of ritual space. Martyr shrines outside North African cities became the locus for meals, possibly even Eucharist and baptisms (Burns and Jensen 2014: 94, 113–20). Local bishops did not necessarily control these spaces, which also endangered communal unity and even the ritual calendar since those who assembled there often preferred the feast days of martyrs to the traditional holy days of Easter (Brown 1981: 32–3). Given the role of wealthy patrons in providing for both cultic spaces and ritual performances, tensions emerged between lay patrons, both male and female, and Christian bishops, who insist that they alone are the community's *patroni*. Ambrose cleverly coopted the authority of the martyrs in defence of his own teaching against the Arians by orchestrating the transfer of the relics of Gervasius and Protasius to the site of the liturgy in his church (Brown 1981: 37).

However, martyrs could lend authority to Christian groups that bishops like Ambrose considered heretical. Canon 9 of the Council of Laodicea (fifth century) stipulates that believers are not to visit the martyria of heretics to pray or worship there. Canon 34 prohibits pilgrimages to such sites (Huttner 2013: 299–300). 'Orthodox' Christians even claimed prominent martyrs from a 'heretical' group as their own in the case of martyred Novatianists in Phrygia. Another example of how fuzzy boundaries continued to be involves the ongoing issue of when to celebrate Easter. In some areas Quatrodeciman celebration survived Nicea's ruling against the alternate calendar. The 38th canon of Laodicea prohibits receiving unleavened bread from Jews or sharing in their impieties. Evidently only 'heretical' groups and perhaps more isolated individual churches were employing the Jewish Nisan 14 in determining the date of Easter. Canon 8 of the Council of Laodicea illustrates that lack of clarity about the boundary lines between 'orthodox' and 'heretical' with regard to baptism. The text stipulates that Quartodecimans, Photinians, and Novatianists seeking reconciliation with the mainstream church do not have to undergo the full baptismal rite. A brief period of instruction followed by anointing suffices. Montanists, on the other hand, must undergo the entire process of instruction and baptism, even members of the Montanist clergy (Huttner 2013: 301).

Questions about rebaptism belong to a larger set of controversies over ritual effectiveness. Where did the spiritual power mediated through ritual praxis reside? In those who are acknowledged authorities within the politically recognized group, whether orthodox, Arian, or other? As long as participants follow the established ritual forms and words, the divine power is effective in the rite. Or does the spiritual power mediated through ritual require a form of spiritual attainment on the part of officiants? For Valentinians, those 'spiritual ones' who have attained the visionary experiences in which

[13] See Burns and Jensen (2014: xlv–xlvii, 23–7). They insist that as late as the fifth century the generic label 'Christian' is a misnomer, given the variety of groups claiming to be the church that were unwilling to recognize others as the church.

the Self experiences its unity with a heavenly counterpart could guide others to deeper understanding and transformation. For the confessors and martyrs of the third century, conformity to the sacrificial death of Christ meant that they too possessed the power to mediate forgiveness of sin.

For bishop-martyrs like Polycarp or Cyprian who combined their ritual role with the social status of elite patrons and their intellectual ability to engage in textual interpretation and teaching, martyrdom confirmed their claim to mediate divine power. But other instances in which the confessors exercised powers of forgiveness at the expense of episcopal authority required a sustained, new response. Rather than a communal meal on the model of private associations, Cyprian insisted on the Eucharist as a sacrifice that was necessary for salvation and could only be performed by the official representative of Christ, the high priest (*Ep*. 63.18.3; Burns and Jensen 2014: 251–69). Only the bishop could set the conditions under which those who had denied their faith under persecution or fallen into other serious sins could be reincorporated into the Eucharistic fellowship.

Conclusion

Students of early Christianity piece together fragments of evidence from texts, material culture, attested ritual activities, and speech-acts from the larger culture, and theological treatises to generate glimpses of Christian practice. One must be cautious about the assumption that 'Christian' constituted the primary self-identity for most participants, though it may have done so for the literate elite who composed the theological writing that comprises most of our evidence. While one should be cautious about importing anthropological analyses of ritual traditions that shape an entire culture, ritual studies suggests questions often neglected in the standard patching together of a history of liturgy approach. Participation in what participants perceive to be the traditional words and actions is the key, not intellectual speculation about underlying reality or 'how ritual works'. Even the mythic associations or elements of shared narrative that are attached to particular ritual acts can shift over time or differ from one group to the next.

From this perspective, doctrine, orthodox or otherwise, appears marginal. The heresiologists' presumption that speculative or deviant teachings must involve equally weird ritual words and actions is rhetorically powerful, not because it reflects the truth, but because it plays into real anxieties about the effectiveness of ritual acts. Following the correct calendar is as essential to ritual performance as the proper actors following what is perceived to be the right or traditional script. Early Christians had to negotiate the complexities of innovating orthopraxy. In the process 'orthodoxy', holding what is acknowledged as accepted, traditional teaching moves from being a marginal issue to a requirement for ritual participation. A key moment in the process is visible in second-century Rome and Irenaeus' response to the theological speculation of Valentinian teachers both there and in his own region. But the complex process of negotiating

communal boundaries to preserve the holiness and ritual effectiveness of the churches continues to articulate new 'doctrines' of what the reality underlying the ritual is well into the fifth century.

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PART IV

RITUAL IN THE ANCIENT CHURCH

CHAPTER 30

CHRISTIAN INITIATION

PAUL F. BRADSHAW

Introduction

It is customary to view the ritual patterns of Christian initiation through the lens of the classic theory of *rites de passage* advanced by Arnold van Gennep (1909), and to a very much lesser extent the refinement of his theory by Victor Turner (1967; 1969), who not only emphasized the central, liminal, phase of the ritual but also showed how each phase had its own substructure. However, the theory has generally been applied to these rites only in the very broadest of terms, without any of the caveats expressed by some anthropologists or the contributions of Mircea Eliade and others to the question (see, e.g. Petersen 2011: 20–31; see also DeMaris, Chapter 22 in this volume). It should also be noted that its original application was to situations where individuals already belonged to a community and were being initiated into a new level of membership or status within that same community rather than, as in the case of the Christian rituals, situations where someone was entering a new community to which he or she did not formerly belong, even by birth (Johnson 2007: xix).

Van Gennep distinguished three phases in rites of passage: (1) preliminary rites of separation intended to ease the individual undergoing the ritual away from his or her former social position; (2) the marginal or liminal phase when the individual is in transition, having broken with their former status or identity but not yet having assumed a new one; and (3) the post-liminal phase incorporating and integrating the person into a new role or status. This classification will continue to be adopted here simply as a heuristic device for the analysis of these particular examples of Christian initiation rites. However, because liturgical texts as such are almost non-existent in the early centuries of Christianity, a necessary prolegomenon is to identify the principal primary sources to be drawn upon and to evaluate their date, provenance, character, and value as evidence, before proceeding to apply van Gennep's matrix to that evidence.

The Sources

For the third century in the East, the principal primary sources are the Acts of Judas Thomas and the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, both originating in Syria. The former, extant in both Syriac and Greek, is a series of stories purporting to give an account of what befell the apostle Thomas during his mission to India, ending with his martyrdom. Among these stories are several accounts of him initiating converts into Christianity, which, in spite of the fictional character of the work, have been thought to provide some evidence for actual initiatory practices in Syria, although obviously any features uncorroborated by contemporary or later sources should treated with some hesitation (a convenient English translation of extracts from all these texts can be found in Whitaker 2003: 16–21). These several accounts differ significantly in the rituals that they describe, not only between the Greek and Syriac versions but also within each version, mainly with regard to whether they mention an anointing as well as immersion in water and, if they do, the form and interpretation that are ascribed to it. While some of these variations can be attributed simply to differing degrees of detail in describing what was essentially an identical ritual event, others imply that there was not a standard form of initiation rite in the region but rather the co-existence of at least two such patterns, possibly each belonging to a different geographical area within Syria. Although the work is believed to have been originally composed in Syriac, scholars have generally been of the opinion that the extant Syriac version is later than the extant Greek version and has undergone some theological re-interpretation, but at least as far as the initiation stories are concerned, the Syriac accounts are not based on the extant Greek text, and the two seem rather to be parallel modifications of a missing Syriac original (Bradshaw and Day 2014: 6–8).

The other principal Syrian source, the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, was formerly regarded as the work of a single compiler in the first half of the third century but has now been convincingly shown by Alistair Stewart-Sykes to be a composite work containing material from the second through to the fourth century (Stewart-Sykes 2009). This means that we need to view with some caution the dating of various elements within it. In fact, it mentions Christian initiation only very indirectly in three places, the first extremely briefly in a reference to aspects of the ministry of a bishop, the second in a comparison with how baptized Christians who have committed serious sin are to be treated, and the third in connection with the ministry of female deacons, where instructions are given as to their role when women are being baptized (Bradshaw 2012). Where there is no corroboration from other sources, we cannot know for certain whether its instructions were put into actual practice, or if they were, how widely they were followed.

For the West in the third century, we are chiefly reliant on the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian in North Africa (texts in Whitaker 2003: 9–13). Here we do have explicit descriptions of what was done, but unfortunately not in the form of a continuous narrative but rather of relatively brief allusions and comments that often require rearrangement in order to establish the actual ritual sequence. In earlier years, one would have added to this the evidence provided by an anonymous church order then thought to be the

Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus and believed to offer reliable information as to liturgical practice in third-century Rome. However, a growing number of scholars now seriously doubt the accuracy of that attribution and regard it instead as a composite work containing material dating from the second to the fourth century without any necessary connection with Rome. While the ancient core of its baptismal rite certainly appears to be of North African or possibly Roman provenance because of its similarity to the witness of Tertullian and of Roman sources from later centuries, subsequent layers in the text contain features only found in Eastern practices. Thus, though it can still be drawn upon, it can really only corroborate what is known from elsewhere and cannot independently establish third-century ritual features (Bradshaw et al. 2002).

For the latter half of the fourth century, the sources are more plentiful, and chief among them are the homilies and addresses given by leading ecclesiastical figures to those who either were preparing for baptism or had just undergone it, Ambrose of Milan, Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom (in Antioch), and Theodore of Mopsuestia (excerpted texts in Whitaker 2003; Yarnold 1994). There is some uncertainty whether the *Mystagogical Catecheses* usually attributed to Cyril are really his or belong to his episcopal successor, John, but that does not materially affect their standing as evidence for practice at Jerusalem in the late fourth century, although Juliette Day has argued that Cyril's *Baptismal Catecheses* belonging to an earlier period of his life reflect a different form of the city's initiation rites (Day 2007; Bradshaw and Day 2014). There is also a division of opinion as to whether Theodore's homilies belong to the period before 392 when he was a presbyter in Antioch along with Chrysostom or after that when he was bishop of Mopsuestia. Differences between what he and Chrysostom describe seem to imply that the latter was the case.

Third-Century Syrian Rites

As far as third-century Syria is concerned, the first phase in van Gennep's rites of passage, rites of separation, appears to be relatively undeveloped. In the initiation stories in the Acts of Thomas, preaching by the apostle leads the hearers to request baptism, but no formal catechumenate or other preliminaries are described. There is, for instance, no explicit mention of fasting before baptism, as in the earlier Didache, or of a formal act of renunciation. However, one of the three passages in the *Didascalia* points to the existence of a more extended process, at least in some communities. Here the parallels described between the action to be taken against Christians who have committed serious sins after they have been baptized and the manner in which those as yet unbaptized are to be treated reveal that, just as the convicted evildoer is expected to promise to repent, so too those wanting to become Christians are to do the same, and to say 'I believe'. After this, they 'are received into the assembly so that they may hear the word' but they are not to participate in communion 'until they have received the seal and become perfected' (*Did. apost*. 2.39.5–6). The reference here to a confession of faith along with the act of

repentance, a unit that is also found in fourth-century sources, also strongly implies the existence of some sort of prior stage of preaching or instruction, or else how could the potential converts be in a position to make those declarations before they had been admitted to the assembly and heard 'the word'?

Thus, preparation for baptism appears to have involved two preliminary periods of instruction, with a combined rite of renunciation and profession of faith forming the ritual transition between the two, a rejection of and separation from the past and an embrace of the future, or in van Gennep's terminology, a movement from the pre-liminal to the liminal stage of initiation. The *Didascalia* does not give any indication of the duration of the second stage of instruction, but the seventh-century West Syrian bishop and liturgical commentator James of Edessa claimed that after the candidates' renunciation and profession of faith 'the ancient custom was that they remained thus for a long time' before they were baptized (Whitaker 2003: 62), and comparative study of later sources has revealed evidence for the widespread existence in the ancient Christian world of a final period of baptismal preparation lasting exactly three weeks (Johnson 1990). This, therefore, may well be what was intended here. Similarly, although the content of 'the word' that was to be revealed only in this second stage is not further explained in the *Didascalia*, later evidence suggests that it was primarily doctrinal and consisted of—or soon after became—the contents of the creed, with the instruction in the first stage being primarily ethical and based upon readings from books of the Old Testament.

The liminal second stage culminated in a rite of anointing with oil followed by immersion in water. The immersion seems to be meant as the central action and the anointing as a preliminary to it. This is supported by the language used in the prayers of blessing over the oil that precede the anointing in those stories in the Acts of Thomas where the apostle anoints the whole of the candidate's head and body before baptism (Chapters 121 and 156–8), which focus primarily on the theme of healing. Moreover, when female candidates are involved, the apostle anoints just the head and delegates the anointing of their naked bodies to a woman, but not the immersion, which he always performs himself, thus suggesting the ritual priority of the immersion (with the female candidates putting on some sort of linen undergarment after the anointing to preserve their modesty in the water). The instructions in the *Didascalia* deal with the same situation of female candidates and prescribe the same arrangements (Bradshaw 2012).

Those stories in the Acts of Thomas that describe an anointing of the head alone before the immersion in water (Chapters 25–7 and 132–3), during which it is the 'name of the Messiah' that is principally invoked and no blessing prayers as such precede, imply a somewhat different signification to the action. It has frequently been thought by scholars that it was understood as conferring the Holy Spirit on the baptizands in a kind of parallel with the post-baptismal anointing found in later Eastern and Western rites (Bradshaw and Day 2014: 18, n. 44). Although the formula accompanying the anointing in one of the two stories (Chapters 25–7) does invoke 'the Spirit of holiness', it is said there to be for the purpose of purification, i.e. as preparation for the baptism rather than bestowing the Spirit itself on those being baptized. Sebastian Brock has suggested that the ritual model for this pattern might have been the Jewish rite of initiation for male

proselytes, circumcision followed by baptism, with the anointing understood as conferring the mark of new ownership as circumcision had done (1979: 99). Certainly, the dominance of the language of 'sealing' found in connection with Syrian initiation rites in general does seem to point to their primary signification as having been that of marking a new identity. Another possibility, which does not exclude the first suggestion, has been raised by several scholars, and developed most fully by Susan Myers, that at one time in the past the anointing of the head had constituted the central rite of initiation in some Christian communities and immersion in water had not been practised there (Myers 2001, 2010). Thus, the third-century pattern would have been an amalgam of two earlier and distinct rituals of initiation. Whatever the truth of that, however, in the context of these third-century rites, the anointing of the head is in a subordinate and preparatory position just like the whole-body anointing in the other cases.

The sources indicate that the immersion was accompanied by a formula referring to the Father, Son, and Spirit of holiness that was spoken by the one performing the ritual act. This marked the conclusion of the liminal phase of the initiation rites. The sole post-liminal ceremony that is described is immediate participation in the Eucharist, thus incorporating the newly baptized fully into the community's central ritual action for the first time. Although in some cases it is explicitly said that they put on their clothes when they come out of the water, there is no indication that this was viewed as anything other than a practical necessity, and no mention is made of any greeting or exchange of a kiss prior to their participation in the Eucharistic meal.

Third-Century North African Rites

Unlike the early Syrian sources, Tertullian expresses a preference for baptisms to take place at Easter 'because then was accomplished our Lord's passion and into it we are baptized' (*Bapt*. 19). Although some scholars have thought that this practice was an ancient tradition, perhaps going back to the first century, there is no firm evidence for it earlier than Tertullian's statement, and the fact that he then adds a reference to the meeting with a man carrying a pitcher of water when the disciples were sent to prepare the Passover (Mark 14:13) as further justification for the occasion rather implies that the custom was not yet so firmly established as to need no argument. Although Paul had used the image of baptism as dying and rising with Christ in Romans 6, this does not seem to have been taken up by Christian writers prior to Tertullian, and it may be that baptisms had first become attached to Easter for practical reasons, because the feast was preceded by one or two days of fasting, as was baptism, and the theological rationale added subsequently. That this preference for Easter was not just restricted to Tertullian at this time is confirmed by a commentary on the Book of Daniel which expresses the same predilection (1.16). This was written by a certain Hippolytus in the third century, traditionally associated with Rome although doubt surrounds the actual provenance of the author (Cerrato 2002). Tertullian goes on to offer Pentecost as a second-best occasion for baptism

because 'during it our Lord's resurrection was several times made known among the disciples and the grace of the Holy Spirit first given'. This is one of the earliest references to the existence among Christians of this fifty-day season after Easter, and because fasting was prohibited during it, we must conclude that any baptisms occurring then must have been of candidates who had undergone baptismal preparation, including fasting, before Easter but for one reason or another (e.g. sickness or menstruation) had been unable to complete their initiation then. Tertullian concludes, however, that regardless of these preferred times, every day of the year is suitable for baptism.

Like the *Didascalia*, he regards the bishop as the normal minister of baptism, with presbyters and deacons permitted to deputize for him with his permission, but he also extends this right to laymen in cases of necessity, though not to lay women (*Bapt*. 17). He is aware that some children as well as adults are being baptized (he is, in fact, our earliest explicit witness to the practice), but he opposes it because they may subsequently develop an evil character and so prevent their sponsors from fulfilling the promises they had made on behalf of the children—again our earliest testimony to the practice of others speaking for candidates unable to answer for themselves (*Bapt*. 18).

Details of the preparation for baptism are very sparse indeed. Tertullian simply states that preaching precedes baptism (*Bapt*. 14) and that 'those who are at the point of entering upon baptism ought to pray, with frequent prayers, fastings, bendings of the knee, and all-night vigils, along with the confession of all their sins, so as to make a copy of the baptism of John' (*Bapt*. 20). However, it may be that the earliest layer in the so-called *Apostolic Tradition* may shed some more light. The actual baptismal rite delineated there closely parallels what Tertullian describes, implying that they both originate in a similar liturgical milieu, even if later layers of the document introduce elements from elsewhere. This in turn suggests that the more detailed account of the preliminaries of initiation practice may also reflect third-century North African customs.

Like the *Didascalia*, the *Apostolic Tradition* appears to presuppose two stages of instruction, but whereas in the former the ritual transition was the candidate's renunciation and profession of faith, in the latter, it is an examination of his or her moral behaviour while under instruction. Have they honoured the widows? Have they visited the sick? Have they done every kind of good work? Only when their sponsors answer in the affirmative are they to be permitted to 'hear the gospel' (*Trad. ap*. 20). Whether that was literally the reading of the canonical gospels or some doctrinal teaching based upon them is not made clear, but there are signs in the later Western tradition that catechumens may once have been excluded before the liturgical gospels were proclaimed in the Eucharistic liturgy (Bradshaw 2009: 61–4). In this second, liminal, phase Tertullian's praying, fasting, and vigils would have taken place.

The renunciation and profession of faith that marked the transition between the two phases in the early Syrian rites occur in North Africa in much closer association with the baptismal rite itself. The renunciation was apparently performed twice, as Tertullian states that not only 'on the point of coming to the water' but also 'somewhat earlier in church under the hand of the bishop we affirm that we renounce the devil and his pomp

and his angels' (*Cor*. 3). The use of the word 'church' suggests that the first of these was made in the presence of the congregation so that they might witness it (rather than referring to a building) and the second in the place of baptism, which would have been more private because the candidates would have been naked at this point, although why the profession of faith was not repeated in a similar way is surprising.

Just before or after the second renunciation, there was also an invocation of God over the water that was to be used for the immersion. 'All waters, when God is invoked, acquire the sacred significance of conveying sanctity: for at once the Spirit comes down from heaven and stays upon the waters, sanctifying them from within himself, and when thus sanctified they absorb the power of sanctifying . . .' (Tertullian, *Bapt*. 4). Although we have encountered prayers over oil in the Acts of Thomas, this is the earliest reference to a prayer over the water. The practice may well have come about when baptisms no longer took place in the moving or 'living' water of springs and rivers (cf. Did. 7) where the Spirit was presumed to be naturally present but in domestic settings where still water was used and so needed such an invocation to make it life-giving.

The profession of faith apparently differed in form from what seems to have been the Syrian pattern. Rather than the candidate making a statement themselves ('I believe . . .'), it seems to have been cast in interrogative terms, and took place after the candidates had entered the water: 'we are three times immersed, while we answer interrogations rather more extensive than our Lord has prescribed in the gospel' (Tertullian, *Cor*. 3; see also *Prax*. 26; *Spect*. 4). While Everett Ferguson speculates on the possible origin and meaning of what is described here (2009: 341–2), the most likely explanation, especially in the light of the evidence of the *Apostolic Tradition* and of later Western practice, appears to be that each candidate was first asked something like 'Do you believe in God the Father?' and after an affirmative response was immersed once in the water, was then asked 'Do you believe in Jesus Christ?' and following an affirmative response was immersed a second time, and then finally was asked, 'Do you believe in the Holy Spirit . . .?', and after the response was immersed a third time; the triple immersion having been developed to reflect the threefold character of the questioning. Tertullian's expression 'rather more extensive . . .' very likely refers to an expansion of the wording of the questions, and especially of the third, from the simple threefold names of Matthew 28:19 (Bradshaw 2009: 79–80). He also described the process of answering the questions as being 'drafted into the army of the living God', likening it to taking the military oath (*sacramentum*) with which a soldier signed on (*Mart*. 3). In contrast to what we have seen of Syrian practice, therefore, the words that accompany the central ritual action of immersion are not an indicative formula spoken by the one performing the baptism but the candidate's own profession of faith.

The post-liminal phase includes several symbolic actions that express the new status into which the baptized were entering. First, there is an anointing with oil. Tertullian interprets this as the spiritual equivalent of the Old Testament anointing of priests (*Bapt*. 7). Although he makes no reference to the New Testament image of Christians as forming a priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6), it had been regularly taken

up by other early Christian writers (e.g. Justin, *Dial.* 116.3; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.8.3; 5.34.3). The association with priestly unction would naturally suggest that the anointing was of the head rather than the whole body and took place after the person had dressed, but Tertullian does not explicitly say so. As was proposed in the case of the Syrian pre-baptismal anointing, this anointing may conceivably have once been an alternative to water baptism before the two methods of initiation were combined.

It is followed by an imposition of the hand, apparently accompanying prayer, as Tertullian describes it as 'in benediction, inviting and welcoming the Holy Spirit' (*Bapt.* 8). He had earlier clarified that, in spite of the Holy Spirit being invoked over the water, it had not been given to the candidates in the water but through the water 'we are cleansed and prepared for the Holy Spirit' (*Bapt.* 6). Later in the third century, Cyprian of Carthage indicated that it was the bishop who performed the action and that he too understood that it was by this prayer and the imposition of the hand that the Holy Spirit was given and the baptized were thereby 'perfected with the Lord's seal', citing as the biblical warrant for this Peter and John laying hands on the Samaritan converts in Acts 8 (*Ep.* 73.6, 9). Significantly, Tertullian did not make a connection to this New Testament precedent but instead likened the ritual gesture to Jacob blessing his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh in Genesis 48:14–20, and so it seems improbable that the action of the Apostles was the true source for this ritual development. On the other hand, some alternative theories put forward by scholars for its derivation have proved less than satisfactory, and it may be that the Genesis story does point to its original meaning as a symbol of the acceptance of the newly baptized as children of God (Johnson 2007: 86–7, 108–10). A letter of Cornelius, bishop of Rome in the middle of the third century, quoted by the fourth-century church historian Eusebius, confirms that something similar was current there too. He spoke of the heretic Novatian receiving emergency baptism while he was ill, but failing subsequently to receive the 'sealing' by the bishop: 'As he did not receive this, how could he receive the Holy Spirit?' (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.43.20). Whatever its origin, the eventual association of the Holy Spirit with this post-liminal ritual rather than with the immersion itself was to prove very significant for later theology and practice, as it opened up the possibility for the gift of the Spirit to be thought of as detached from baptism.

Finally, Tertullian is the first witness to another feature in the post-liminal phase that will recur in a number of later traditions (Bradshaw et al. 2002: 134–5). Not only do the newly-baptized go on to participate in the Eucharist but this first communion also involved the reception of a 'compound of milk and honey', and thereafter the neophytes abstained from bathing for a whole week (*Cor.* 3). He does not explain the meaning of either of these, although the connection of milk and honey with entry into the Promised Land seems obvious.

To summarize, therefore: the third-century Syrian and North African initiation rites have in common a pattern of two phases of instruction with a ritual transition between them and ending in the immersion in water of the candidates and followed by their participation in the Eucharist. But they differ in a number of significant ways:

- In the Syrian rites, the transition is effected by the candidates' renunciation of evil and profession of faith; in North Africa (and Rome?), it seems to have been by the witness of their sponsors to the candidates' way of life.
- In the Syrian rites, an anointing either of the head or of the whole body generally seems to have preceded the immersion; in North Africa, it followed it.
- In the Syrian rites, the immersion was accompanied by an indicative formula spoken by the minister of baptism; in North Africa, the renunciation and profession of faith were made by the candidate in response to questions posed in close association with the immersion, which was threefold in form.
- In the Syrian rites, the post-liminal phase apparently comprised participation in the Eucharist alone; in North Africa, it was expanded to include not only anointing but imposition of hands with prayer for the Holy Spirit and then partaking of milk and honey along with the reception of communion.
- The Syrian evidence does not indicate any preference for initiation to occur on any specific occasion; North Africa and Rome express a preference for the Easter season.

The Fourth Century

The fourth-century sources both provide additional detail to the outlines given in the third-century sources and also suggest that a process of development and ritual enrichment had taken place in the intervening period. Two developments in particular had the greatest impact on the pattern of initiation rites. The first was the universal adoption of a forty-day season of fasting immediately prior to the festival of Easter, with the latter now being designated as the sole, or at least the principal, occasion in the year for the administration of baptism. The origins of this Lenten season seem to lie in a combination during the first half of the century of two earlier but distinct traditions: (1) an annual forty-day fasting season observed by Egyptian Christians in commemoration of Jesus' fast in the wilderness, apparently not in conjunction with Easter but serving also as a period of baptismal preparation and ending with the administration of baptism (Bradshaw and Johnson 2011: 99–108; but cf. Buchinger 2013); and (2) the existing preference for baptism at Easter among North African and Roman churches in the third century. This amalgamated pattern led to a reshaping of the structure of the rites of initiation, with the two phases of baptismal preparation both being absorbed within the forty-day season without any ritual transition between them. During the forty days, the ethical teaching based on the Old Testament of the first phase was followed directly by the teaching on the doctrines of the Creed of the second phase.

The second equally significant change was not just in the ritual forms themselves but in their function. Whereas in earlier times the rites can for the most part be assumed to be giving symbolic expression to a genuine conversion experience that the candidates had undergone, or were undergoing, by the late fourth century, there is evidence

that many people came to baptism with quite different motives, and so the rites developed an increasing theatricality in an attempt to instil in the candidates a profound psychological effect in order to compensate for the deficiency of an actual conversion (Bradshaw 2011: 108–12). Thus, the baptismal homilies of the period use expressions such as 'awe-inspiring' and 'hair-raising' to describe the sensational style of ritual now adopted, and at least at Jerusalem and Milan the rites were cloaked in such great secrecy that candidates were supposed to have no idea in advance what was going to happen, in order to increase the dramatic effect. It was only after they had experienced the celebration of baptism and the Eucharist that an explanation of the meaning of the sacred mysteries in which they had participated was given to them in daily instruction during the week following Easter.

Syria and Jerusalem

The element of exclusion from the ears of those who were unbaptized that had marked the second phase in earlier times was now extended to cover the whole Lenten season. Its beginning was marked by a formal enrolment of the candidates for baptism, with their names being written down. This was likened to enlistment for military service and also to a spiritual betrothal by John Chrysostom (*Catech*. 1.1). Cyril of Jerusalem distinguished between those of the unbaptized who had not been enrolled and those who had by calling the former 'catechumens' and the latter *photizomenoi*, 'those who are being enlightened', and insisted that the latter should not reveal to the catechumens what they are about to learn in their pre-baptismal instruction, 'for it is a divine secret that we deliver to you, even the hope of the life to come' (*Procatech*. 12). Both Egeria, a pilgrim to Jerusalem in the latter half of the fourth century, and Theodore of Mopsuestia speak of the presence of sponsors for each candidate, who are to vouch for their virtuous way of life when their names are inscribed (Egeria, *Itinerarium* 45; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Baptismal Homilies* 1.14–15)—something that seemingly formed the ritual transition between the two phases in third-century Roman and North African practice. Had it been copied from there or did it exist in the Syrian tradition in earlier centuries but go unmentioned?

Thus, the pre-liminal phase of the rites had become more formalized and those entering it marked off clearly from other potential converts. It also now involved more than instruction alone: the exorcism of the candidates was also practised daily throughout the season. Prior to this there is no clear evidence of exorcism being used for all who sought baptism, but it seems to have been limited to those who were specifically thought to be demon-possessed. This development points not only to an enhanced understanding of the need for all candidates to be purified from the power of evil but also to the belief that this was a gradual process that required regular repetition in order to achieve its results, in driving out every demon and preparing the candidates to receive the Holy Spirit in baptism. The ritual was performed by designated exorcists and, according to Chrysostom, involved 'fearful words and the invocation of the universal Lord

of all things', said while the candidates were barefoot with their arms outstretched and palms turned upwards. Cyril mentions the use of exsufflation or blowing upon the candidates, who apparently had a veil over their faces, and Theodore adds that they stood on sackcloth (Whitaker 2003: 28, 44, 48). As well as achieving the object of expelling evil spirits, these various dramatic features were also consciously intended to bring about a psychological effect on the candidates. Thus, Chrysostom states that 'the rite imprints great reverence in the soul and leads it to great sorrow for sin', and Theodore comments that sackcloth was used so that 'from the fact that your feet are pricked and stung by the roughness of the cloth you may remember your old sins and show penitence and repentance of the sins of your fathers' (*Baptismal Homilies* 1.23–5). Egeria informs us that at Jerusalem, at the end of the instruction, a week before Easter, each candidate had to recite the Creed aloud to the bishop (*It. Eg.* 46). Theodore of Mopsuestia implies that he too was familiar with a similar practice with regard to both the Creed and the Lord's Prayer (*Baptismal Homilies* 1.26–8; 2.1).

The act of renunciation and the profession of faith, which had earlier functioned as the ritual transition between the two parts of the instruction, have now moved to constitute the new beginning of the liminal phase, directly preceding the rituals of anointing and immersion. Chrysostom described it as taking place on the Friday prior to the baptism itself on Easter Eve, with the candidate kneeling, and the precise words as 'I renounce you, Satan, your pomp, your worship, and your works. And I pledge myself, Christ, to you.' He called it a contract and a signing-on by a soldier for a spiritual contest. It continued to occur in this same location in the later rite of Constantinople, but in the practice known to Theodore of Mopsuestia it was positioned even closer to the baptism, taking place within that rite itself, and the profession of faith was Trinitarian in form (Whitaker 2003: 42–6, 48–9, 109–11). Thus, the liminal phase of initiation had shrunk dramatically in length from its third-century antecedents.

The renunciation and profession of faith were followed by an anointing with oil, both of the head and of the body, which were distinguished from one another according to Chrysostom and Theodore, the former locating the anointing of the head at the conclusion of the profession of faith on Friday with the anointing of the body immediately prior to the immersion on Saturday, the latter interposing the placing of a linen cloth on the candidate's forehead between the two parts. However, some later sources continue to refer only to a single action of anointing, suggesting that this particular division was an Antiochene innovation that was not adopted everywhere. Moreover, in addition to the motif of protection against the devil that Chrysostom uses in relation to the actions, he also speaks of anointing the head as like the anointing of an athlete before a contest, which would make more sense in relation to a unified anointing of head and body. Theodore more logically interprets the anointing of the head primarily as receiving the identification mark of a sheep or a soldier of Christ and that of the body as symbolizing the garment of immortality that will be received through baptism (Bradshaw 2009: 88–91).

The immersion followed after the anointing of the body, accompanied by a Trinitarian formula spoken by the minister, but in a passive rather than active form, i.e. 'N. is

baptized in the name of the Father …', both Chrysostom and Theodore explaining this form as indicating that the true source of baptismal grace was not the minister but the Holy Trinity. They both also explain that the minister pushed the head of the candidate under the water three times, once at the mention of each person of the Trinity. Theodore added that the immersion was preceded by an invocation of the Spirit over the water. Although Chrysostom continued the Syrian tradition of understanding the candidate to receive the Holy Spirit in the water, Theodore instead ascribed that to what he called the sealing after the immersion in the rite known to him (Whitaker 2003: 46, 49–50). While some scholars have concluded that this must have been another anointing, that does not necessarily follow: it may have been a simple hand-laying or sign of the cross. Because we know so little about it, it is difficult to decide whether this should be regarded as the conclusion of the liminal phase or as a post-liminal ceremony.

The liminal rites of fourth-century Jerusalem exhibit some interesting ritual differences from these Syrian forms. First, at the renunciation, the candidates did not kneel and they apparently recited the formula phrase by phrase after prompting by the minister rather than all at once as in the Syrian rites. They are also explicitly said to have faced west for that, and then to have stood and turned to the east for the profession of faith, something that would have been difficult in the Syrian rites, where they knelt throughout (Day 2007: 49–53). The profession of faith was an expression of belief in the Trinity, somewhat similar to that described by Theodore, rather than an act of personal adherence to Christ, as in Chrysostom.

More significant than those differences, however, were the form of the anointing that followed, the words used at the immersion, and the presence of a post-baptismal anointing related to the Holy Spirit. The first anointing was explicitly described as exorcistic, performed with exorcized oil over the whole of the candidate's naked body, something encountered in Western rites at this period but not in other Syrian rites of the time. The immersion was threefold and accompanied by an interrogation put to the candidate concerning his or her belief in the Trinity, apparently resembling that used in North Africa in the third century and found in other Western rites in the fourth, rather than the Trinitarian baptismal formula spoken by the minister, as in the other Syrian rites. Immediately following the immersion, there was an anointing of the newly baptized on the forehead, ears, nose, and breast. Although the author of the *Mystagogical Catecheses* insisted that this was the means by which the Holy Spirit was conferred, it is noteworthy that his explanation for the particular parts of the body that were anointed is neither explicitly pneumatological or Christological, as Juliette Day has pointed out (2007: 111). This suggests that the association with the Spirit may well have been a secondary development, made some time after the rite had acquired that anointing for a quite different reason. Be that as it may, since it apparently occurs before the baptized have put on their clothes, it should probably be regarded as part of a liminal phase of initiation, marking the completion of the transition, rather than part of the post-liminal ceremonies, like its equivalent in Tertullian and the later Western rites.

Because the interrogatory profession of faith at the immersion effectively duplicates the previous act following the renunciation, and because neither a pre-baptismal

exorcistic anointing nor a post-baptismal anointing related to the Spirit are indigenous to the Syrian tradition, this strongly suggests that they have all been inserted into the rite under influence from elsewhere. Juliette Day points to the tradition underlying the *Canons of Hippolytus*, an Egyptian derivative of the *Apostolic Tradition*, as the most likely primary source. That same church order also includes the instructions for facing east then west at the renunciation and first profession of faith, which Day similarly argues were not native to the Jerusalem rite because of the particular topography of its site (2007: 56, 137–8).

It only remains to examine the post-liminal phase of these Eastern rites. Although the third-century sources mentioned nothing other than participation in the Eucharist, our fourth-century authors reveal several developments preceding that action, apparently differing from place to place. Chrysostom speaks of the exchange of the kiss and of intercessory prayer—both being activities traditionally restricted to the baptized alone. He also appears to imply the putting on of a baptismal robe, but this is only made explicit in Theodore, who does not refer to the kiss or prayer. According to Egeria, at Jerusalem the newly baptized made a visit to Christ's tomb before joining the assembled congregation, something not mentioned in the *Mystagogical Catecheses*, where there is only a possible hint of a special baptismal garment (Day 2007: 120–31). All of these ritual actions in various ways gave symbolic expression to the new status acquired by the baptized: they do not confer any additional gifts or advancement.

Milan

The Western evidence for fourth-century practice is not nearly as plentiful as that in the East, and the clearest picture we have comes from Ambrose of Milan rather than Rome. Here, the outline of a rite similar to that of North Africa in the third century has been elaborated and displays some interesting unique features. The initial enrolment of the candidates takes place, rather oddly, not at the beginning of Lent but earlier in the year, at the Feast of the Epiphany on 6 January, a custom also attested for nearby Turin, thus raising the possibility that at one-time baptismal preparation in North Italy had begun on that date with baptism itself at its conclusion, unrelated to Easter (Johnson 2007: 170).

There is a possible allusion to a weekly exorcism of the candidates during Lent, and on the Sunday before Easter they were taught to recite the Creed. On the following Saturday, there was a ceremony known as 'The Opening', which Ambrose relates to Jesus' healing of the man who was deaf and dumb (Mark 7:32–7) but which may well have originally served as the transitional ritual between the moral and doctrinal phases of teaching, for which the candidates' ears needed to be symbolically opened. It would subsequently have been moved when both phases were incorporated into Lent. Something similar seems also to have existed in the Roman rite of the period. In its later position, however, it continues to mark the new boundary between the pre-liminal and liminal stages of the rites, taking place at the entrance to the baptistery (Bradshaw 2009: 59–63). The

candidates then enter the baptistery, where they are anointed 'as Christ's athletes', renounce the devil, and enter the water to make the threefold interrogatory profession of faith similar to that in the early North African rite.

After this, the post-liminal phase is marked by several ceremonies. First, the bishop prays over the newly baptized and anoints them once more. While the first preparatory anointing was apparently of the whole body, this is of the head alone and chrism rather than simple oil is used. There follows a ceremony found in other rites in North Italy and elsewhere—although Ambrose identifies it as the only one not shared with Rome—and this is the washing of the feet of the newly baptized. It seems odd that those who had just been totally immersed in water should need to have their feet washed once more, and it suggests the possibility of the existence at one time of a tradition of an alternative water initiation ritual to total immersion, linked somehow to John 13, which had later become amalgamated with the more common baptismal rite rather than being superseded by it (see further Johnson 2007: 21–3). The final ritual action that Ambrose describes prior to participation in the Eucharist is something he calls a 'spiritual sealing'. The nature of this has been much debated (Johnson 2007: 171–5). That it is intended to convey the Holy Spirit, Ambrose makes clear, but what its form was is less obvious: another anointing (as was certainly the case at Rome by the beginning of the fifth century), an imposition of the bishop's hand as in Tertullian, or something else?

Conclusion

Although the processes of Christian initiation in third-century Syria and in North Africa do display some commonality of structure, there were also significant differences between them. This regional distinctiveness is still just about visible in the late-fourth-century rites of Syria and Milan but has become partially obscured, first, by the common adoption of Easter baptism as the norm and Lent as its preparatory period and second by the addition of further subsidiary ceremonies and elaborations, some of which, and especially those in Jerusalem, seem to have been copied from one another. This process led to a temporal contraction of the middle or liminal phase of the threefold structure of rites of passage, so that it became limited to the ritual actions in and around the baptismal font itself. The overall result was a mixture of familial resemblance and local diversity in ritual pattern that continued to mark Christian rites in later centuries.

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CHAPTER 31

EUCHARISTIC PRACTICES

LIZETTE LARSON-MILLER

Introduction

This chapter is the second in this volume to focus on the ritual aspects of early church Eucharistic practices (see Kaše, Chapter 23 in this volume, for earlier centuries). In a handbook on early Christian practices, the ritual focus on the Eucharist is shaped in two ways. First, the historical ritual practices in the Eucharist are the primary content of this chapter, and second, the insights of contemporary ritual studies are applied to early Christian Eucharists to broaden understanding of the practices and their meanings for those who were engaged in these ancient liturgies and related rituals. A word about the accessibility of rituals in history is necessary because we do not experience historical rituals first hand, but only access them via written and material culture remains. This means that one of the primary tools of contemporary ritual studies, direct observation (followed by written ethnography), must be modified. Teresa Berger, in her (2011) study on liturgical history and gender, summarizes the degrees of separation well. Berger reminds her readers of the unity and the differences between the actual past, to which we have no direct access; the sources of our information, both written and material, with their invaluable insights alongside their own biases and problems (the latter particularly with texts); historiography, our analysis, 'intervention and reconfiguration' of the first two steps; and finally, tradition, the concern with 'authorizing claims to the past' (Berger 2011). When we study the rituals of past religious events, particularly those that continue as contemporary and ongoing sacramental practices, Berger's categories of history, sources, interpretation of those sources, and tradition are crucial for reminding contemporary scholars of the gap between historical liturgy and present practice, as well as for cautioning against assuming contemporary practice and understanding are sufficient lenses through which the meaning of ancient rituals can be comprehended.

The rituals with which this chapter is concerned are developments in the Eucharist from the third through the fifth centuries, a time of tremendous change in which the political legalization of Christianity and large increases in the numbers of adherents

sweep the contexts, ritual processes, frequency, and understandings of the early church gathering for this 'orchestration of rite' (Ellwood 2014: 53) into an outwardly different liturgy. And while the Eucharistic liturgy is probably the most historically researched arena of Christian liturgical history, in the last two decades, it has also been the focus of fresh approaches and new methodologies. Coming to early Eucharistic practice through several ritual lenses offers another fruitful set of emphases and connections that reveal the growing interdisciplinary reality of ritual studies, liturgy, and early church history.

This chapter will approach elements of the Eucharist in two ways. The first is to trace the shift from the first centuries of Eucharistic practice to this second period through the understanding of Eucharist and Eucharistic community as a primary means of forming Christian identity (see also Davies, Chapter 4 in this volume). The second section will look, in a more limited way, at the growing focus on the physical consumption of the Eucharistic elements and how that changes understandings and practices around the reception and non-reception of the consecrated elements and the implications of that for the status of clergy.

Current Scholarship on Eucharistic Practices in the Third to Fifth Centuries

The Eucharist in the Third Century

Drawing on recent scholarship by Paul Bradshaw (2004), Andrew McGowan (2014), and J. Patout Burns and Robin M. Jensen (2014), it is important to state the obvious—this is a century that has no universal pattern of Eucharistic practice, nor is there a single theological interpretation of what the Eucharist means. While the scattered extant texts of the third century can be found all around the Mediterranean, three geographical areas offer the most fruitful evidence for understanding the spectrum of practices and interpretation of meaning: North Africa, Syria, and Alexandria (Bradshaw 2004).

For North Africa, the extant texts about the Eucharist include the span in time between two prolific writers, Tertullian of Carthage (*c*.155–*c*.240) and Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage (*c*.200–258). Tertullian, writing before and after the turn of the century in North Africa, describes in several writings (*Apol*.; *Ux*.; *Spect*.) an evening meal, called an *agape* in his *Apologeticus*, in which prayers were offered, scriptures read, a 'moderate' meal consumed, and 'religious songs' sung. The gatherings were 'an act of religious duty' (Bradshaw 2004), an evening banquet which is increasingly seen by scholars as a central context of the early third-century North African Eucharist. But Tertullian is also a witness in his lifetime to a morning Eucharist (or at least the reception of communion) on the station days of Wednesday and Friday, a description that points to the

North African practice of reserving the sacrament and taking it home to allow for daily reception. The tradition of receiving pre-consecrated communion and reserving it for domestic consumption continues in the writings of Cyprian, but as the numbers of Christians increase, the evening meal as the normative setting of Eucharist seems to decline, perhaps prompting Cyprian to defend the 'morning sacrifice' (Burns and Jensen 2014) as the practice that celebrates the resurrection of the Lord which happened in the morning, rather than the Last Supper before his death (*Ep.* 63.16.1–2). Cyprian shares many details of this morning sacrifice, from the readings (scripture and martyr acts), intercessory prayers for all kinds and categories of people, offerings of bread and wine from participants, a prayer over the gifts, and the reception of communion. While the theological emphasis on the sacrifice of Christ's death as an important guiding image of the Eucharistic prayers is clear in Cyprian's writings, only phrases of actual prayers remain in his writing, along with descriptions of water and wine mixed together as appropriate even in the morning liturgy (Burns and Jensen 2014). Between Tertullian's and Cyprian's time the change in setting for the Eucharist seems to be less about a change from the domestic to the public as it is an expansion of the domestic communal practices (McGowan 2014).

Third-century Eucharistic descriptions from Syria include important material evidence as well as several different forms of texts. Possibly originating from the area around Antioch, the *Didascalia Apostolorum* is a classic church order particularly concerned with good order and the liturgical leadership of the bishop. It reveals a physical separation of men and women in the Sunday assembly, the ordering of presbyters and deacons, prayer directed towards the east, and a suggestion that a visiting bishop would say 'the words' over the cup and the resident bishop those over the bread, perhaps suggesting a series of separate prayers rather than a unified prayer of thanksgiving (Bradshaw 2014). The Sunday gathering, not specified as morning or evening, included readings from 'holy Scripture' and the reception of 'divine food', as well as descriptions of Eucharistic gatherings to be offered in both the 'congregation' and in the 'cemeteries', especially on the anniversaries of those who had died. At both of these, what is offered and sanctified is 'pure bread' by 'means of invocations' (Bradshaw 2014: 105).

Farther into eastern Syria, the adapted house church of Dura-Europas gives an important insight into a third-century space for liturgical gatherings. Archaeological work reveals a large house with walls removed and rooms altered to accommodate a gathering of Christians (a rectangular space with a raised area at one end) and a baptistery in a separate corner of the house. Ramsey MacMullen (2009) is the most recent author to suggest how people might have gathered in and used the different spaces, while still allowing the house to continue as both a domestic home and gathering space for the broader Christian community in Dura-Europos.

Also from the eastern part of Syria, several texts weave reflections about the Eucharist (or other liturgical gatherings) into writings of broader concerns. The Acts of John (early third century) contain two prayers that appear to be related to Eucharistic bread, addressed to Christ, and focused almost exclusively on praise of God (Bradshaw 2004). In a similar way, the Acts of Thomas (third century) contains a prayer over bread alone

and another with a prayer for bread and for wine, with two prayers addressed to the Holy Spirit (or the Spirit of Christ). These prayers, particularly in their series of short invocations, have led some scholars to see a parallel 'in the magic spells of the ancient Mediterranean world', but may also be linked to the Aramaic acclamation *marana tha*, 'Our Lord, come!', and thus rooted in both 1 Corinthians and the Didache (Bradshaw 2004: 126). It should also be noted that there are prayers for oil, vegetables, and salt too, suggesting that for these communities 'all their eating, and their Eucharistic food in particular, [reflected] the purity and holiness to which they had been called, …' (McGowan 2014: 42). Finally, a Eucharistic prayer that may date from the end of the third century and most likely reflects East Syrian theology and practice, *The Anaphora of Addai and Mari*, is probably a Syriac-language compilation of different layers of Eucharistic theology, with a core of praise and thanksgiving, absent a reference to the historic event of Jesus' last supper.

From Alexandria, the early theologians and teachers Clement (*c.*160–215) and Origen (*c.*185–*c.*251) reveal insights into Eucharistic practice in Alexandria. Clement describes the posture of prayer (now often referred to as the *orans*), the kiss of peace between members of the community, and an *agape* setting for the Eucharistic celebration. Like other third-century writers, Origen discusses the care that Christians must take in treating the consecrated bread with caution because it is not ordinary bread, but he also theologizes on the prayer of thanksgiving pronounced over the bread and its effect on the bread which becomes a 'holy body and sanctifies those who partake of it with pure intention' (Bradshaw 2014: 108).

Another possibly late third-century Eucharistic prayer (of disputed dating and structure but with clear affinities to later Egyptian anaphorae) is the *Strasbourg Papyrus 254* which in its core is again a prayer of general thanksgiving rather than a focus on specific actions of Christ. It does, however, contain a phrase that will become central to many later Eucharistic prayers: 'giving thanks, we offer the reasonable sacrifice and this bloodless service', emerging in second-century discussions of Eucharistic theology (Stevenson 1991: 109).

The Eucharist in the Fourth Century

By the second half of the fourth century, the writings about the Eucharist and from the Eucharistic liturgy expanded exponentially, so that in a summary introduction such as this, only a few examples can be offered. There is some evidence from Egypt and Jerusalem in the mid-century, and by the last two decades an abundance of information from these two locales and from North Africa, Syria, Rome, Antioch, Cappadocia, and elsewhere around the Mediterranean.

It would be best to begin with the so-called *Apostolic Tradition*, a composite (or edited) document combining rituals and texts from the third and fourth centuries and attributed by many to Hippolytus of Rome. Contemporary scholarship on the *Trad. ap*. does not agree on the authorship, but there is consensus that it is an edited

document representing traditions than span more than a century of ritual practices (see Bradshaw, Johnson, and Phillips 2002). The *Trad. ap*. contains several sections that focus on the Eucharist, calling it 'the 'oblation' or 'offering' in language typical after 300 or so. The *Trad. ap*. contains the first extant prayer that reflects several characteristics of later Eucharistic prayers: a unified prayer with 'greater historical and narrative emphasis than' earlier examples; the 'Last Supper story' in the context of a Eucharistic prayer in the ordination of a bishop; the 'opening dialogue between presider and others, a more extended prayer over both bread and cup, and a concluding amen' (McGowan 2014: 40). At the same time, there are both continuities with and changes from the evidence of the third century, such as the offering and blessing of other food besides bread, as well as a cup of water and of mixed milk and honey at the baptismal Eucharist (McGowan 2014), and a shift in the focus of the communal evening meal. *Trad. ap*. 25 describes this meal (not called *agape*) presided over by the bishop with prayers and psalms, as containing a thanksgiving prayer over light, not bread and wine, and a subsequent blessing of bread that is 'not the Eucharist, [not] like the body of the Lord' (McGowan 2014: 51).

In the middle and towards the end of the fourth century several examples of Eucharistic liturgies and/or Eucharistic prayers begin to appear with the institution narrative (the synoptic gospel-inspired words of Jesus over the bread and wine) added to an earlier prayer structure. This embolism (a short additional prayer) becomes increasingly central to the theological descriptions of the meaning of the Eucharistic prayer and for the Eucharist in general. There are several theories as to why this embolism appeared in some churches and then grew to be virtually universal by the next century. The first is the catechetical argument. As the church became first legal and then a cultural and political norm, there is evidence that many new Christians were neither 'well instructed in the Christian faith or as deeply committed as most of [the] former adherents had been' (Bradshaw 2004: 139). The addition of the institution narrative, such as that first detected in the *Sacramentary of Sarapion* and the *Apostolic Tradition* may have been to teach the origins and connection of the ongoing celebration of the Eucharist to the actions of Jesus before his death, as well as add an intensity to the mystery and instil a sense of awe in the worshippers regarding the reality and seriousness of the Eucharistic celebration (Bradshaw 2004).

The second theory of why the institution narrative is added to Eucharistic prayers and becomes central to the ritual and interpretation of the Eucharistic liturgy has been proposed by Maxwell Johnson (2013). In the pivotal fourth century, the decline of martyrdom (in actuality and in threat) may have impacted the understandings and assumptions regarding the 'cost' of participation in the Eucharist as the 'public cult' of martyrdom faded from local experience. 'When the Eucharist was still private, not open to non-Christian view, the martyrs' sacrifice was public and dramatic . . .' (Young 2001: 11–12), but as these intense experiences fade, the catechetical need to emphasize the cost of the Eucharist may have benefited greatly from the focus on the sacrifice of Christ centred on the 'cup of Christ'. 'Sharing the cup of Christ is to share with the company of the martyrs in Christ's redemptive sacrifice on the cross, a relationship

that the use of an institution narrative in Eucharistic praying makes rather clear' (Johnson 2013: 22).

The successful fostering of a sense of awe around the Eucharist in the late fourth century becomes apparent through the writings of geographically diverse bishops who write in similar ways regarding their despair at the lack of participation in communion. The last decades of the fourth century, then, give evidence of the rise of celebrations of the Eucharist in which fewer Christians actually receive communion. Part of this is certainly not new—the third century gave evidence of the importance of fasting which prevented reception of communion—but the catechetical concerns because of growing numbers of Christians, the loss of the experiential or familial impact of martyrdom theology for many, and the rise of infant baptism which precluded catechesis before baptism coincided with the increase in the frequency of Eucharistic celebrations. In many places, the Sunday celebration was augmented by the station days of Wednesdays and Fridays, in some places by Saturdays, and by martyr feasts. 'In some churches in the West by the end of the century a daily Eucharist may even have been known' (Bradshaw 2004: 146).

By the end of the fourth century, the shape of the whole Eucharistic liturgy was recognizable in the central elements, with an opening greeting, readings from the Old and New Testaments, preaching, prayers (generally followed with the kiss of peace), and the celebration of the Eucharist with an increasingly fixed Eucharistic prayer, followed by blessings and dismissal. These Eucharistic prayers also begin to take on regional resemblances, reflecting the rise of liturgical families with greater internal uniformity that will give rise to greater external differences from one linguistic and geographical liturgical family to another in the century to follow. At the same time, the establishment of churches and pilgrim centres in both Jerusalem and Rome assure that liturgical practices are shared and borrowed, particularly with regard to the shaping of the liturgical year and the sanctoral cycle.

Beyond developments around specific words and ritual actions in the Eucharistic celebration, changes in the church, theology, and culture also have an impact on the Eucharist. Conciliar decisions of 325 and 381 affect the rewriting of prayers to better express Trinitarian theology and leave a trail of how theology, and particularly doctrine, changes liturgy. The clarifications on holy orders (defining differences between presbyters and deacons, as well as minor orders), the growing impact and authority of bishops and regional leaders, the public nature of the church, and the consequent suppression of some roles for women will also have an impact on the Eucharist by the end of the fourth century.

Finally, for reasons like those mentioned above, but also because of internal pressures from differently believing Christians, Eucharistic theology began to circle around the elements of bread and wine and how Christians participate in Christ through them. The addition of an *epiclesis* (the invocation of the Holy Spirit) in a number of Eucharistic prayers, will give rise to what has been called an 'epiphany' understanding of consecration, in which 'the Spirit is invoked on the gifts in order that the presence of Christ may be revealed in them' (Bradshaw 2004: 156).

The Eucharist in the Fifth Century

Changes to the political boundaries of the over-extended Roman Empire and the fall of the city of Rome itself, the rising power of various non-Roman tribal leaders in the Latin-speaking West, the outward fracturing of theological unity in the Eastern Roman empire, the successful expansion of Christianity into new tribes and cultures, a mid-century plague and subsequent famine, the challenges of population loss, and the economic blow of the fall of Carthage all contributed to substantial changes in the culture and politics outside the church that, of course, changed the church too. By the end of the fifth century, the church was the government in many places, a reality that would culminate in the following century with Pope Gregory I.

In North Africa, the primary source of writing on the Eucharist are the sermons of Augustine, Bishop of Hippo from 395 until his death in 430. First, Augustine gives an overview of the Eucharistic liturgy in several writings, noting the segregation by gender to the left and the right, with clergy and other consecrated ranks (such as widows, virgins, and monks) gathered in the front, and catechumens and penitents in the back. There may have been a procession to the apse, which was probably separated from the nave by a chancel screen (Burns and Jensen 2014). In the apse there was a circular bench for the presbyters, with the *cathedra* for the bishop in the centre. An opening greeting and introductions to the season appear to have been the gathering rite, followed by the readings from the prophets and apostles, 'depending on the day and the discretion of the presider' (Burns and Jensen 2014: 263). These were followed by a sung psalm, alleluias, and the proclamation of the gospel. Augustine gives evidence of a course reading from one gospel, changed for the feasts of martyrs (where a selection from the *acta* was also read). This was followed by preaching from the bishop's chair (or standing at the lectern if not the bishop). After the sermon, the catechumens were dismissed (and perhaps the penitents), the intercessory prayers, led by the deacon, followed. The bread and wine were brought to the wooden altar in the centre of the nave floor—the arrangement of which is known from extant archaeological work and a valuable mosaic from Thrabraca (see Figure 132 in Burns and Jensen 2014). Other gifts of food (and clothing?) were brought for the poor and presented while psalms were sung. The Eucharistic prayer is only known through the six-part opening dialogue. Otherwise, Augustine never reveals any wording, 'even in a partial quotation in a sermon or other text . . . in keeping with the discipline of secrecy' (Burns and Jensen 2014: 266–7), aside from the various groups of people commemorated in the prayer and evidence that a form of the institution narrative was used. The breaking of bread along with the recitation of the Lord's Prayer followed, a kiss of peace was exchanged, and a blessing was given for those who were to receive communion. The congregation gathered around the altar to receive communion standing, and the remaining consecrated bread was 'reserved in the church but not in private homes, as it had been in the third century' (Burns and Jensen 2014: 268). The liturgy concluded with a thanksgiving prayer and procession of the clergy out of the church building. Communion was offered daily in the church, apparently at a Eucharistic liturgy, but Augustine gives

no evidence of presiding over an evening *agape*. The Eucharistic celebrations seem to be solely in the morning by the fifth century, even those for the martyr feasts, where a non-Eucharistic vigil was held in the evening and Eucharist, at the martyr shrine, the following morning.

In Southern Gaul, a good deal of the written reflection on Eucharistic practice is centred on martyr feasts also. The erudite senator-become-bishop of Clermont, Sidonius Apollinarius (*c*.431–*c*.485), is credited with writing a number of *contestatiunculae* (prayers or prefaces for the Mass) and a number of musical settings for vigils and masses for the saints in Gaul (Vogel 1985). Marmetus, Bishop of Vienne in the mid-fifth century, is credited with a tremendous number of liturgical compositions, including the creation of Rogation Day liturgies, martyrologies, the inculturation of litanies to the Gallican tradition, and the beginnings of what will become known as the *Bobbio Missal,* now believed to have originated in the Rhône River valley between Vienne and Lyons (Hen and Meens 2004). But, while there are extant writings on the production of Gallican Eucharistic texts in the fifth century, there are no liturgical texts except for occasional prayers. What remains, however, is a clarity of the patterning of time for fifth-century Gallican Christians, with a strong monastic pattern imposed on the larger community, including a very full sanctoral cycle, a pattern of three 'Lents' through the year, days of fasting on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, and a pattern of all-night vigils for major feast days.

Finally, in the city of Rome, even with the many political and economic challenges, some interesting Eucharistic practices emerge in the fifth century that will influence practice and theology elsewhere. In a 2005 article, John Baldovin explores the ritual practice of uniting the various churches in the city of Rome by the sharing of the consecrated bread from the pope's liturgy with the neighbourhood Eucharistic liturgies presided over by priests. It is an important theology symbolized by this sharing of the consecrated bread (delivered by 'runners' to each of the church communities) in that the separate communities literally form a single worshipping community by the addition of the papal *fermentum* to their communion. The letter of Pope Innocent I (416) to Decentius, Bishop of Gubbio, assures Decentius that this is only for the urban churches; the outlying martyr shrines have presbyteral celebration. Baldovin's point is that if those churches are having Eucharist, what are the urban churches really doing with the *fermentum*? While the definitive answer is not clear, the possibilities are that the bishop of Rome was the only presider at a Eucharistic liturgy in the city on any given Sunday, therefore stressing the theology of unity of the Eucharist—one bread, one cup, one altar, one bishop (reminiscent of Ignatius of Antioch); or the bishop sent the *fermentum* to the various churches where it was mixed 'in the chalice of unconsecrated wine by the presbyters. Thereby they were consecrated by contact and distributed to the people …' (Baldovin 2005: 50), which would give an alternative consecration to the practice of consecration by words alone. A third possibility was that the individual churches in Rome were actually celebrating the Eucharist, but timing it to start a little later than the major celebration, so that the arrival of the *fermentum* would signify 'that there was in principle only one Eucharistic celebration on a given Sunday' (Baldovin 2005: 50). A fourth

possibility was that the decline in reception of communion by the laity because of a heightened sense of 'dread and awe' may have resulted in a liturgy of the word followed by a ritually minimalist reception of communion by the clerics alone. There seems to be an increasing scholarly consensus that the last—fewer and fewer Christians receiving communion by the fifth century—may very well have been the reality, making it 'possible for the bishop's celebration to be the only Eucharistic celebration within the walls of the city of Rome' (Baldovin 2005: 53).

With this overview of several aspects of Eucharistic liturgical practice in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, this chapter turns to an interpretation of three different ritual aspects of early Christian eucharist.

Ritual Aspects of the Third- to Fifth-Century Eucharist

Eucharistic Ritual as Formation of Christian Identity

The expression of unity and of communion found in rituals of eating together has been explored elsewhere in this volume, and has been well articulated by many scholars since Wayne Meeks' original work (1985). Our knowledge of the earliest Eucharistic traditions affirms this, particularly as the Eucharized bread and wine were contextualized within an evening meal, the *deipnon* or *cena domini*. The first recorded description of this meal is from the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 11:17–34) in the mid-50s, and, as seen in the overview of the third and fourth centuries, the centrality of meal theology forming and re-forming a new community and sense of shared identity endured as a primary context and interpretation of the Eucharist for generations. But as discussed above by Davies (see Chapter 4 in this volume), contemporary ritual studies have approached the function and effects of ritual participation in many ways, and the contributions of the social sciences to identity formation have resulted in a multiplicity of approaches. Here, relying on Judith M. Lieu (2004) and several other scholars, the shift from the type of ritualizing identity needed in the first centuries of a new religious system are perceived as different from the role that the Eucharist played in identity formation in later centuries.

In the first three centuries of Christianity, Eucharistic participation was part of a boundary-creating ritual. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu on *habitus,* or 'the ingrained patterns' which shape 'shared practices and perceptions' (Bourdieu 1977: 148), the *habitus* of early Christian Eucharistic practice created a shared identity in part because of a separation from the world of outsiders. The more 'other' the Christian Eucharistic group was, the stronger the inner cohesion became, a palpable and concrete sense of shared identity for those who shared communion together. But, by the late fourth century, the 'us' and 'them' was for many Christians

not between themselves and non-Christians (many of whom had been openly hostile to Christianity), but between Christians and Christians. The 'us' and 'them' might have been between the average Christian and the professional Christians; between monastic, clergy, virgins, and widows; between orthodox Christians and those with heterodox Christian theology (Arians, non-Arians); or between partially initiated Christians (catechumens), temporarily excommunicated Christians (penitents), and the general faithful. With the 'earthing', or the coming to terms of Christianity as an ongoing and increasingly stable religion, the Pauline sense of an 'eschatological interpretation of the shared meal [that] prohibited by divine sanction any failure in absolute allegiance' (Lieu 2004: 163) gave way to a less prepared or certainly less intense Christian population. How did the Eucharist form identity in this new manifestation of Christian life?

First, Christianity was a 'de-ethnicizing movement' as in Galatians 3:28 (Fishman 1989: 51). Unlike other religious groups, Christianity was not a race or ethnicity, or even a culture. 'Christians had to invent new parameters according to which they could fashion their own identity' (Stroumsa 1996: ii 341). This meant that the Eucharistic celebrations needed to adapt and lead to the creation of identity in a differently formed Christian community. The ritual response came in multiple ways, including the re-writing of Eucharistic prayers to stress the seriousness of sacrifice (the institution narrative), and the remembering of the primary narrative of Christianity in the death and resurrection of Christ. Ironically, a new 'people of the book' were being shaped in a world that was perhaps 10% literate (Harris 1989), which meant learning the essential narratives was through hearing the scripture readings, listening to preaching, being the recipients of catechesis. All of these activities were social actions, not private learnings, for the vast majority. Likewise, the Sunday Eucharists, the patterning of the celebrations within the liturgical year, and particularly the martyr celebrations, were social engagements that contributed to forming social identity.

In another way, the continued shaping of the Eucharistic liturgies in the late fourth and early fifth centuries gradually in turn shaped a uniformity of spoken responses, sung psalms, reception of communion, arrangement of bodies within the assembled community, and a hierarchy of leadership and roles. From a ritual sociological perspective, while there is always actual variety and multiplicity of interpretation in any group, these differences 'are contained by the symbolic construction and signification of a mask of similarity' (Jenkins 1996: 105). The increasingly fixed texts, structure, and roles of the late fourth-century Eucharist gives identity through a 'mask' of uniformity of practice. Given authorization through the recurring appeal to antiquity and apostolicity in source, the novelty of Eucharistic prayer constructions and related ritual practices adapt and shape the perceptions of participants in a 'dynamic' of the social process that is Bourdieu's *habitus* or 'ingrained patterns of interpretation and understanding that shape the way people articulate their experience' (Lieu 2004: 149) A new relationship of the church in the world called for new symbols and ritual practices to re-form identity by the late fourth century.

The Embodiment of Early Christian Eucharistic Participation and Non-participation

The emphasis in scholarship over the past fifty years on early Christian Eucharistic celebrations as building on social meal symbolisms was a necessary correction to an overemphasis on anachronistic theological applications, but the Eucharist understood as a full meal giving way to a symbolic cultic event is too facile. The meal always carried cultic meaning, it was never meal versus cult or meal versus sacrifice. What does emerge is the understanding and definition of the unity of the body against outsiders as the status of Christianity itself shifts in the context of the larger culture. But there are other changes that ritually affect the Eucharist, including the desire for frequent communion and participation with Christ through the reception of communion, as well as the fear of receiving unworthily as the sense of group cohesion shifts.

Participation as Physical Reception

Consuming the elements of food and drink were central to participation in many cultic circles in the first centuries of this era. The actual eating and drinking engaged and involved the whole person; one either engaged or did not, and with physical eating and drinking, there was no room for intention alone. In addition, the food and drink, often bread and wine, or meat, carried in its very being a sense of sacrifice. In an older article, Philippe Rouillard discusses different ritual meals, highlighting that even a non-animal 'meal' such as bread and wine involves a death, a sacrifice, such as 'the grain of wheat which was a seed' now potentially dead because of its consumption (Rouillard 1982: 128). Cultic meals were always ritual meals, even if their social setting was not as apparent. For early Christians, the saving participation in these elements of Christ's body and blood with multiple layers of tangible participation in the risen Christ becomes particularly apparent in the growing insistence on frequent reception of communion. This is seen in the many examples of daily communion from what later centuries would call the 'reserved sacrament'. It was not so much about being present for the sacrificial rites as it was about consuming the presence in the 'sacrificial' elements, and this prevailing cultural piety was fed by different needs. As mentioned above, Tertullian called for the distribution of communion on station days (*Cor.* 3.3) and gave witness to private consumption of Eucharistic bread at home. Cyprian continued advocating for more frequent communion, particularly during persecutions (Bradshaw 2014: 24).

Along with recent research on receiving communion from the hand of the bishop as often as possible, Clemens Leonhard has suggested that historians look to the structure of the morning *salutario* where the bishop acted as patron to many Christians who came to his house each morning to receive consecrated bread and wine as the Christian equivalent of the culturally presumed distribution of *sportulae* (Leonhard 2014: 435). In addition, the recent reconsiderations of the Roman tradition of *fermentum* described

above 'point to reception of communion one step removed from the actual celebration of the eucharist' (Baldovin 2005: 53). Thus, a practice already 'antique' by Tertullian's time and taking on new forms well into the fifth century proposes a different lens for understanding Eucharistic meaning beyond the cultic associations of a socially-binding meal. The many examples confirm Bradshaw's statement that all of this 'implies that the act of eating Christ's body and drinking his blood was regarded as of such central importance by worshippers at this period that it was thought acceptable for it to be divorced from the rest of the rite …' (Bradshaw 2004: 101). Individual piety or personal participation was clearly expressed through the holistic eating and drinking, and was for many perhaps far more important than 'attending' the official liturgy of the church.

The Expansion of Devotion and Piety in Fasting (the Non-Eucharistic Participation)

Another ritual practice developing in these three centuries seems directly contradictory to the more frequent reception of communion described above: the growing non-reception of the elements, fasting until later in the day, or not receiving even at Sunday Eucharistic celebrations. With regard to the former, it is again Tertullian and North African practices which seem clearest. In order not to break the fast of station days, one might receive the consecrated elements in the morning, but reserve them until after the fast has ended (late afternoon). In addressing those concerned about the fast, Tertullian proposes this compromise: 'If the Lord's body is received and reserved, each point is secured, both the participation in the sacrifice and the discharge of the duty' (*Or*. 19). In this instance, the fast was clearly as important a religious practice as the reception of the consecrated elements for a number of Christians.

The fencing off of the reception of communion will be evident in North Africa and in many Christian centres by the fourth century. Various scholars have proposed different reasons why preachers, teachers, abbots, and bishops began to warn Christians away from unworthy reception of the elements. Max Johnson's work mentioned above proposed that the fourth-century insertion of the institution narrative in Eucharistic prayers was both catechetical and a warning to take the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist linked to the sacrifice of Christ as a very serious involvement (Johnson 2013). Here the ritual dissuasion stems from a shift of catechesis, from pre-initiation to post-initiation, due to the large numbers of converts coming into a newly legal Christianity. Certainly the preaching of John Chrysostom and others focused on warnings about unworthy reception and the need to prepare for communion, in continuity with the Apostle Paul's warning in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 11:27–32). These frequently recorded sermonic warnings seemed sufficient to give potential participants pause. But Paul Bradshaw lists six other possible reasons for the growth of non-reception: absence from church because of a 'lack of commitment rather than a sense of unworthiness'; inability to join in the Eucharist on Sundays because of distance for

those not in the cities; the unfamiliarity of new converts with 'a religion that expected such intimate involvement in its rites on a weekly basis'; the possible impact of desert ascetics and their abstinence from communion; the 'prohibition on fasting or kneeling for prayer on Sundays' which prevented any penitential prayer of preparation before communion; and the 'notion that the consecrated bread and wine had power to protect or heal without the need to consume them' (Bradshaw 2010: 34–5). The growing non-reception of the consecrated elements meant that the power of the body and blood of Christ would grow in the understanding of the average Christian, taking on magical qualities surrounded with fear. The perception from contemporary scholars is that many leading bishops hoped their preaching against sinful practices would result in penance, but the effect seemed to be self-imposed excommunication rather than a change of behaviour. The few extant voices calling for a different approach, such as that of Ambrose of Milan's 'receive daily what is of benefit to you daily' (*Sacr*. 5.25), reveal that this was not yet a universal approach at the end of the fourth century.

Ritually, however, the growing number of Christians not receiving communion changed the focus of the Eucharistic ritual. According to the preaching of such luminaries as John Chrysostom and Augustine, non-communicates came to Eucharist but not to communion, being dismissed or simply leaving before communion was distributed. As Christoph Markschies writes, the extant homilies reveal the gap 'between homiletic ideal and pragmatic experience' (Markschies 1999: 6). These practices of non-reception would begin to affect the structure of the Eucharist as early as the fourth and fifth centuries. A series of dismissals, a shift in the placement of the blessing, and a rise in non-consecrated bread reception, *eulogia*, would focus the ritual action on the consecration without reception, and on the secondary ritual practices.

The Relationship of Ritual Performance to Cultic Leadership

The development of a theology to accompany the reception of communion outside Eucharistic celebrations, along with the growth of non-reception by Eucharistic attendees contributed to, or was part of, another ritual development: the growth of the power of the clergy linked to the power of the Eucharist. As fewer Christians received communion at Eucharistic celebrations, the confecting of the Eucharistic elements grew in importance. The regularization of Eucharistic prayers ('from freedom to formula' in the title of Allan Bouley's (1981) book on Eucharistic prayer development) was partially a matter of doctrinal controversies, differing abilities of presiders, and larger Eucharistic events. But the rise of professional Christians and the rites to make them so was consistent with ritual theories. 'Ritualization' was a cultural practice, then as now, of 'nuanced contrasts and the evocation of strategic, value-laden distinctions' (Bell 1992: 90). The 'value-laden distinctions' included those who were ordained being seen increasingly as those separated from the non-ordained, a distinction clarified not so much by charism or training, but by cultic leadership. Aside from the important conversations

about early church differences between bishops and presbyters, as well as deacons, liturgical presidency early on raised the status of presbyters and overshadowed the link between deacons and their bishop, as well as charismatic leaders versus those appointed to office. The gradual expansion of the term 'priest' to include ordained clerics (in addition to Christ the high priest) was present in third-century writings but more clearly delineated in the fifth century as a way to describe those who 'acted in the place of Christ' (Bradshaw 2013: 205). The need to control doctrine meant that liturgy, particularly Eucharistic liturgy, needed clarity, and written Eucharistic prayers plus the increase in biblical songs rather than liturgical compositions imposed greater catechetical control over words and ideas.

The earliest ordination liturgies (aside from the consecratory prayer of *Trad. ap.*) point to what was primarily a teaching and pastoral position, such as the fourth-century prayer describing the office of presbyter as one of 'steward of your people and an ambassador of your divine oracles' (Bradshaw 1990: 63). By the fifth-century Gallican and Mozarabic prayers, however, there is a clearer link between bishop and new presbyter (rather than presbyter and people), and the ability to consecrate at the Eucharist: 'and with the consent of your people may he transform the body and blood of your Son by an untainted benediction' (Bradshaw 1990: 227). The lack of uniformity in early ordination rites is the dominant feature, but particularly in the Western church, the *Statuta ecclesiae antiqua* of the late fifth century represents a shift that will become more widespread and pronounced in the sixth and seventh centuries, reaching a cultic focus in the multicultural rites of the eighth century. These ordination rites develop in tandem with the rituals of the Eucharist, rites shaped by praxis often more than by theology, and reflect something of the impact presiding at the Eucharist will have on the shaping of the priestly office in the church.

Conclusion

The ritual development of Eucharistic liturgies between the third and the fifth centuries covers large amounts of content and reflects seismic theological shifts in practice, identity, and differing ministerial roles. But the ritual practices also reveal continuity with the earliest centuries in the tension between the pull of antiquity and apostolic authorship that lends authenticity to new endeavours as well as the dances between official liturgical practices and popular piety that were always new manifestations of a people both in, and often of, the world. While some scholars may take issue with the seeming over-emphasis on popular religiosity, the many writings on reception of communion outside the Eucharistic liturgy, together with the growing spirituality of the Christian discipline of fasting would seem to support the reality that the embodied dimension of ritual participation could be found corporately and individually. The common symbolic web of the body of Christ (meaning many different bodies joined in Christ) supported the proposition 'that one function of common symbols is to allow for a variety of

unarticulated interpretations' (Lieu 2004: 164). These rituals, fixed and official or varied and public, contribute to contemporary understandings that identity is 'a grammar of practice' more than fixed markers of orthodoxy and heresy, and the multiple layers of meaning in meals, Eucharist, eating, drinking, fasting, receiving, sharing, and celebrating function as an ongoing 'construction site for identity' (Lieu 2004: 182) in these three centuries in ways distinct from the earliest centuries of Christian meal practice and theology.

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CHAPTER 32

RITUALIZING TIME

JULIETTE J. DAY

Introduction

The historical development of the Christian use of time, in relation to daily and weekly prayer, and to the origin and development of festivals and fasts, has been very well explored in recent times. Robert Taft's very detailed *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: The Origins of the Divine Office and its Meaning for Today* (1986) charted the development of the structure, frequency, and contents of daily prayer from the New Testament to the modern period, with an emphasis upon the origins of the patterns which become normative in later centuries (see Phillips, Chapter 33 in this volume). For the annual cycle of festivals, the liturgical year or calendar, Thomas Talley's *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1991) has been the standard treatment, until recently joined by an updated survey of the historical developments by Bradshaw and Johnson (2011). Additionally, there are studies of individual festivals which draw upon a range of methodological approaches: among these Susan Roll's *Toward the Origins of Christmas* (1995) stands out. None of these, however, draws upon theories derived from ritual studies, indeed, that was not their intention.

From the discipline of ritual studies, the rituals and rites which mark out daily, annual, and other cycles have received attention, but there has been little which looks at the phenomenon and function of time in ritual activities. So, for example, it is not a topic in Grimes, *The Craft of Ritual Studies* (2014), and although Catherine Bell identified 'Calendrical Rites' as one of her ritual categories, she provided no theoretical framework by which we could investigate the early Christian evidence (1997: 102–8). A rare perspective is offered by Roy Rappaport (1992), who sees the disruption of sequential time by ritualized events and periods as a fundamental 'entailment' of ritual; that is, it is an essential component of the way in which ritual operates. The symbolic value attached to moments and periods has been noted by sociologists, theologians, and liturgical scholars in which, according to early Christian evidence on the origin of ritual commemorations, the ritual use of the

biblical narrative is a key interpretative feature. Sociologists have commented on the strategies for defining and marking time as elements of group identity formation and their insights offer useful observations which enable us to challenge the dominance of theological justifications for early Christian practice which are so prominent in sermons, for example, and to place it more concretely in its social, political, and ecclesial contexts.

Human apprehension of time is not stable and fixed, but determined through perceptual and conceptual frameworks (see Bradley 1991). 'Natural time' may appear external and objective in that it is based upon human perception of how the world/universe functions—the rising and setting of the sun, the waxing and waning of the moon, and the seasons are used to mark and organize activity and rest. 'Chronological time' is abstracted from these observations of natural time, by which order and regularity are introduced to produce hours and minutes, and almost imperceptible seconds, to give names/numbers to days, months, and years. Its abstract nature is masked in contemporary experience by the normative and regulatory function of watches and timetables. But the sense of time is subjectively experienced and perceived: from birth to death; in the blink of an eye or the beat of the heart; by sleep and wakefulness; by the intentional manipulation of time to make a pleasurable experience 'last forever', or the sense that an unpleasant one drags on (see Flaherty 2011). 'Ritual time' is not divorced from these notions of time but, because of its connection with history and myth, is considered to operate quite distinctly. Ritual implies repetition, of the ritual event itself, as well as of the actions and texts which constitute it. The ritual event may be conceived of as outside the present time as it recalls and re-presents past events, prefigures future ones, or enters eternal time. Ritual time can then disrupt these other times by offering alternative markers of change, or can appropriate or transform them through the application of the dominant myth.

One problem for early Christian commentators, and enduring until modernity, was the coming together of a notion of God as Timeless Absolute inherited from the Greek philosophers and the biblical narrative of a God, who acts in time, and even agrees to operate in time (Lucas 2002). Augustine considered the problem of divine and human time in *Confessions* XI, presenting the observable and intuitive human understanding of time, measured in years, in the movement of sun and moon, and in the time taken to utter sentences, as a theological problem concerning eternity:

> Your [God's] years do not come and go. Our years pass and new ones arrive only so that all may come in turn, but your years stand all at once, because they are stable: there is no pushing out of vanishing years by those that are coming on, because with you none are transient. In our case, our years will be complete only when there are none left. Your years are a single day, and this day of yours is not a daily recurrence, but a simple 'Today', because your Today does not give way to tomorrow, nor follow yesterday. Your Today is eternity, and therefore your Son, to whom you said, Today have I begotten you, is coeternal with you. You have made all eras of time and you are before all time, and there was never a 'time' when time did not exist. (*Conf*. XI.14, 16; Rotelle 1997: 295)

Although J. R. Lucas (2002) has critiqued the way in which Christian theologians have built upon this Platonic and theological model to posit an unchanging and timeless God, we need to acknowledge that the ritual practices which mark time and the theological, symbolic interpretation of time that developed in early Christianity were based upon such conceptions.

In the ritual event, time collapses as the present and historical past combine in the ritual event and as they signify union with God; while the ritual event takes place, it is 'Today'. This was a key feature of the mystagogical and typological instruction on baptism, such as that which explained the immersion rituals experienced at Easter to the neophytes in Jerusalem around the turn of the fifth century:

> You were asked, one by one, whether you believed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; you made that saving confession, and then you dipped thrice under the water and thrice rose up again, therein mystically signifying Christ's three days' burial. For as our Savior passed three days and three nights in the bowels of the earth, so you by your first rising out of the water represented Christ's first day in the earth, and by your descent the night . . .
>
> The strange, the extraordinary, thing is that we did not really die, nor were really buried or really crucified; nor did we really rise again: this was figurative and symbolic; yet our salvation was real. Christ's crucifixion was real, His burial was real, and His resurrection was real; and all these He has freely made ours, that by sharing His sufferings in a symbolic enactment we may really and truly gain salvation. (*Catech. myst*. 2: 4–5; FC 64: 164–5)

Here, the collapse of time denotes sacramental efficacy.

Although the effect of ritual participation may be to place the participant outside time, ritual very much functions within chronological and natural time and within history; ritual requires these other time concepts in order to assert the distinctiveness of the time within which sacred ritual takes place. Eliade distinguished between sacred and profane time: the former interrupts the ceaseless flow of time as normally experienced and, through festivals, places the participants in a primordial or mythical time which is considered sacred. Susan Roll has summarized:

> Sacred time in its own essence stands above the relatively monotonous sequential time of everyday activity . . . to represent a perpetual reference point to give orientation and meaning to the ephemeral flow, the appearance and disappearance, of contingent realities couched in profane time. (1995: 19; Eliade 1959: 68–70)

The religious mind perceives this transcendent reality to be the 'reference point and guarantor for the stability of life in time', and its status is further enhanced by being 'discovered, not invented, by humans' (Roll 1995: 19).

Investigating time and ritual in early Christianity can involve multiple perspectives. We can approach the topic in relation to the role of time in ritual—how, as we have just seen, the past, present, and future, or eternity, are understood to be present in a single

ritual act. Here we would investigate the symbolic and theological interpretation of the ritual/rite rather than the rite itself; we would be concerned with notions of 'sacred' and symbolic time. Alternatively, one could investigate the way in which the passing of chronological time is marked by certain rituals. This is closer to what Bell (1997) called 'Calendrical Rites', such as those which mark the changing of the seasons and which occur periodically, or the regular commemorations of a community's history or of significant ancestors. Yet another approach would be to study selected rites among the Calendrical Rites and to relate them to the development of annual cycles of events and commemorative periods; this would be the principal approach in historical liturgical studies. And, if we move away from the rituals themselves, we might investigate how the ritualization of time functions within and between communities following, especially, insights from sociologists. In what follows we shall explore these themes as a way of showing how some insights from ritual studies may provide interesting ways of reading the evidence concerning the early development of the Christian calendar.

Ritual Time: Periods and Intervals

As Augustine (*Conf.* XI.16–17) noticed, even if we can mark out periods of time with regularity, our sensation of time passing can be very different: time 'drags' or 'flies by'. Roy Rappaport (1992) suggested a model by which we could understand how ritual distinguishes the passage of time by clearly delineating the ritual event from that which was before and that which follows; these he calls 'phases' and the time in which they unfold as 'periods'. The rituals which comprise each phase 'sever seamless durations into distinct periods and may also invest those periods with significance' (1992: 11). In his nomenclature and interpretation, these 'periods' are made distinct by 'intervals' which belong to neither one period or to the next; the intervals may comprise just one ritual or a series of clearly distinguished ones. Periods and intervals mark the two 'temporal conditions': mundane or ordinary time in periods, and 'extraordinary or sacred time in the intervals' (1992: 12). In liturgical calendars the recurrence of rituals indicates a circularity, and an alternation of periods and intervals, of mundane and sacred time (1992: 15). The interruption of mundane time with rituals attempts to bring the sacred into the world, rather than escape from it, and notice must also be taken of the frequency with which rituals recur—high frequency embeds more forcibly what is encoded by the ritual than low frequency (1992: 18). A final observation from Rappaport which will be useful in our investigation of the liturgical calendar is that the intervals should be 'Long enough to experience *being in* them' (1992: 19; emphasis added).

The early Christian liturgical calendar does not mark the changing seasons (in contrast to the contemporary Western, northern hemisphere churches where the symbolic language attached to Christmas requires Winter, and that of Easter Spring) but imposes its own rather haphazard pattern upon the year. So, although contemporary scholars might interpret the calendar in terms of a narrative of divine-human relations revealed

in scripture, the narrative is not straightforwardly behind the framework. Bradshaw and Johnson have rightly remarked:

> Christians in antiquity did not view the various festivals, fasts and seasons that they experienced through each year as forming a unity, a single entity, and indeed those events themselves did not emerge in any planned or co-ordinated fashion but instead as a number of unrelated cycles, with the result that they tend to overlap or conflict with each other. (2011: xiii)

By the end of the fourth century, evidence from the major episcopal sees tells of an apparently coordinated and coherent ordering of the year into separate commemorations of biblical events or martyrs, to which are attached preparatory and/or celebratory days and weeks depending on the importance of the commemoration. The principal ritual focus of the year is the annual feast of Easter celebrating Christ's passion and resurrection. Originally a feast occurring on a single day which was to be distinguished from other days, even from other Sundays, the constituent events each acquired their own commemoration spread over three days, the Triduum, and a succeeding eight days (an octave) of focused celebration. The Triduum contains separate rituals for Christ's death on the Friday, and resurrection on the Sunday; in later liturgical practice this period was conceived to be one liturgical event so that even though the ritual events were separated in time, they were not distinguished by ritual introductions and conclusions. These preceding and succeeding periods became longer and more precisely defined. Before Easter, there developed a three-week and then forty-day preparation for baptism and of fasting (see Johnson 1990), which was intensely focused during the last week, Holy or Great Week. After Easter, festal time was extended for forty days to incorporate the individual feasts of the Ascension and then Pentecost. Bradshaw noted that eventually the feast of Easter would dominate a quarter of the liturgical year (Bradshaw 1999: 2). This whole cycle was clearly distinguished from the rest of the year, even after the Advent-Christmas-Epiphany cycle gave the feast of the Incarnation a similar structure of extended preparation and celebration.

Rappaport's observation that an interval should be long enough for participants to experience being in it seems most useful here. The multiplicity of rituals around Easter and the extension of the preparation enable the abrupt change of tone at Easter to be more highly remarked, and the extended celebratory period following, during which fasting was forbidden as well as kneeling in prayer, is certainly long enough. This raises an interesting question whether in seeking to highlight the feast by extending it, the experience of the feast itself diminishes.

The cult of martyrs (see Eastman, Chapter 39 in this volume) involved commemorations of local heroes occurring annually on the date of their death. These dates were preserved locally but the commemorations could spread internationally through hagiographies and martyrologies. Because of the ban upon the dissemination of body parts, such commemorations would be very particular to the local church and it is not until Jerusalem acquires a disproportionate influence in liturgical development

from the end of the fourth century that martyrs become internationalized. This we see most effectively with the dissemination of the relics of St Stephen after their discovery in Jerusalem; in the so-called 'Trier Ivory' which depicts the 'adventus' of St Stephen's relics into Constantinople (see Holum and Viken 1979); and Augustine's account of miracles worked by the martyr in North Africa (*Civ*. 22.8). These intervals/events are to be contrasted with the development of the Christological cycles, focused upon Easter as a common celebration of all Christians regardless of the date upon which it was actually celebrated (see *Civ*. 32.4).

Émile Durkheim concentrated on the social function of rituals which govern human behaviour in the face of the sacred, and thus the periodic gatherings enabled participants to experience what he called 'a collective effervescence', a heightened emotional state through which they were able to identify with the gods (1965 [1912]: 52–3). Periods of fasting, penance, catechetical preparation for baptism, and the extensive Holy Week rites drive the congregation towards the celebration of the resurrection, and facilitate a more intense experience of celebration after the privations of the previous weeks. The content of preaching foreshadows the celebration. Thus, Pope Leo 'the Great' reminded his congregation of the theme of his previous sermon, on the death of Christ, as he preached on the resurrection:

> In my last sermon dearly-beloved, not inappropriately, as I think, we explained to you our participation in the cross of Christ, whereby the life of believers contains in itself the mystery of Easter, and thus what is honoured at the feast is celebrated by our practice. And how useful this is you yourselves have proved, and by your devotion have learned, how greatly benefited souls and bodies are by longer fasts, more frequent prayers, and more liberal alms … Since, therefore, by our forty days' observance we have wished to bring about this effect, that we should feel something of the Cross at the time of the Lord's Passion, we must strive to be found partakers also of Christ's Resurrection, and 'pass from death unto life' (1 John 3:14), while we are in this body. (*Sermo* 71.1; *NPNF*^{2} 12: 182)

Calendrical Rites

The ever more complex annual cycle masked the distinctive dynamic which shaped the separate units within the year and no more so than when complete calendars are produced which name festivals on particular days and assign to them specific biblical texts. The first and most complete of these from the third to the fifth century is the so-called *Armenian Lectionary* (*AL*; see Renoux 1969–1971), which lists the feasts for the city of Jerusalem in the early decades of the fifth century. The three manuscripts of the Lectionary indicate some development since the decades when Egeria recorded the Jerusalem festal cycle but the broad outline of the calendar is consistent. *AL* begins with the feast of Epiphany on 6 January, with its preceding vigil and followed by an octave; then comes a mixture of commemorations of biblical and ecclesial saints and

martyrs until the Lenten and Easter cycle appears in its approximate position in the calendar. After which, the individual commemorations in May resume the calendar, but this is again interrupted by Ascension and Pentecost placed in their approximate position. The Lectionary concludes on 29 December, and we note that on 25 December, Jerusalem and Armenia keep the feast of James and David, although the Lectionary does note that elsewhere the Birth of Christ is kept on that day. Feasts are provided with a psalm and antiphon, some with an Old Testament reading, most with one from the 'Apostles' (Acts or the epistles), and occasionally a non-biblical reading, another psalm to accompany the Gospel reading and the Gospel reading itself, normally from Matthew. Egeria frequently noted that a distinctive feature of the Jerusalem liturgy was that the readings were always appropriate to the time and the place. Thus they were chosen with care to explain or justify the feast, but they also control the range of possible interpretations of it.

The list reveals a number of interesting features. First, the hierarchy of major feasts is determined by the presence of a preparatory and commemorative period surrounding the feast itself. The space devoted to the cycle from the beginning of Lent, through Holy Week, Easter, and its octave occupies over half of the contents. Only two other feasts have octaves attached (eight days of celebration after the feast)—Epiphany and the feast of the Dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The former is quite understandable as a Christological feast universally commemorated, but the latter is peculiar to Jerusalem. The Dedication (*Encaenia*) was the annual commemoration of the dedication of the church and thus celebrates Constantine's building programme in Palestine. The Lectionary informs us that at this feast the relics of the True Cross were displayed and venerated, a ritual which commemorated Helena's discovery of the Cross and not the Crucifixion. There are three other imperial commemorations in *AL*: the death of Theodosius on 19 January, of Constantine on 22 May, and of the apparition of the Cross in the sky on 7 May, about which Bishop Cyril wrote to Constantius upon his accession as a sign of divine favour. These feasts demonstrate the local church's assertion by ritual of the political importance of Jerusalem both within the empire and within the church (see Day 2014).

Second, we notice that, hand in hand with the Christianization of the Palestinian countryside through the construction of shrines, monasteries, and churches at the locations of biblical events, the ritual calendar of Jerusalem also laid claim to numerous 'Old Testament' saints: the prophets Jeremiah, Zacharias/Zechariah, Elisha, Isaiah; but also, rather unexpectedly, the 'Ark of the Covenant', and the Maccabees. Third, we notice that Jerusalem boasts no martyrs of her own. In his *Martyrs of Palestine*, Eusebius records none from the city during the persecutions; however, the church promoted St Stephen internationally as 'proto-martyr' through the dissemination of relics and Stephen's martyrium became the focus of imported commemorations such as the 'Forty Martyrs' who originated from Sebaste in Asia Minor (celebrated on 9 March).

As the list of commemorations expands in the fourth and fifth centuries, bishops were required to assert the validity of new feasts through appeal to their historicity and

theology, and to indicate their place in the hierarchy of festivals. Thus, in Antioch, John Chrysostom urges recognition of the new feast of the Nativity in a sermon preached in honour of St Philogonios:

> [A] feast is approaching which is the most solemn and awe-inspiring of all feasts. If one were to call it the metropolis of all feasts, one wouldn't be wrong. What is it? The birth of Christ according to the flesh. In this feast, namely Epiphany, holy Easter, Ascension and Pentecost have their beginning and their purpose. For if Christ hadn't been born according to the flesh, he wouldn't have been baptised, which is Epiphany. He wouldn't have been crucified, which is Easter. He wouldn't have sent the Spirit, which is Pentecost. So from this event, as from some spring, different rivers flow—these feasts of ours are born. (*Philog.;* Mayer and Allen 2002: 191)

And in Milan, Ambrose is required to explain precisely the historical and miraculous discovery of the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius, who would jointly become an important focus for Milanese devotion as well as bolster his own political and ecclesial power. In his letter to his sister Marcella, he indicates opposition which suggests some had doubts about their authenticity:

> And they who usually do so have a grudge against this solemnity of yours; and since because of their envious disposition they cannot endure this solemnity, they hate the cause of it, and go so far in their madness as to deny the merits of the martyrs, whose deeds even the evil spirits confess … And the Arians say: 'These are not martyrs, and they cannot torment the devil, nor deliver any one, …' (Ambrose, *Ep*. 22.16; *NPNF*^{2} 10: 439)

Ritualized Time and Community Boundaries

In certain respects, the ritual calendar functions in a similar way to other forms of ritual participation, through a symbolic system it asserts group identity and segregation from others, and it regulates social life. In the period under consideration in this part of the volume, the third to fifth centuries, we can see Christianity increasingly asserting itself in public life to the point where its feasts and festivals dominate the life of the empire. This simplistic narrative of social dominance should not obscure points of conflict and of assimilation, but the development of the ritual calendar, the liturgical year, was in some instances the result of explicit separation from Judaism. Thus, the choice of Sunday as a Christian holy day is in distinction to the Sabbath/Saturday, or the choice of Wednesday and Friday as regular Christian fasting days in opposition to the Jewish weekly fasts of Monday and Thursday (see Did. 8:1), but it is particularly with the feast of Easter that these issues come sharply into focus.

Easter emerges as the primary universal festival for Christians and, as we have seen, is the focus around which the whole year was ordered, but the conflicts about the date on which the feast was to be celebrated (rather than how it was to be celebrated) clearly indicate its function as a boundary marker. At the end of the second century, the newly appointed bishop of Rome, Victor, sought to enhance his fragile situation by insisting that Easter was kept on a Sunday and not on the same day as the Jewish Passover, 14 Nisan; the custom of celebrating Easter on that day was the traditional practice of those from Asia Minor. This may well have begun as an attempt to impose unity upon the multicultural Christian groups in Rome, but Victor's insistence that other bishops hold synods to condemn the practice escalated the controversy. Victor's strategy was not successful because of a reluctance to excommunicate Christians who were adhering to what they asserted was an apostolic tradition, although they were henceforth to receive a distinctive name—'Quartodeciman'. Letters from this second-century controversy were preserved by Irenaeus of Lyon and then quoted in full without apparent condemnation of either party by Eusebius of Caesarea in the decades before Nicaea (see *Hist. eccl*. 3:23–4).

Nevertheless, concerns about the connection between the Passover and Easter extended into subsequent centuries; even though Christians and Jews were separate religious communities, calculating the date of Easter relied upon the Jewish calendar and this provided the impetus for an alternative method of calculation. In third-century Alexandria, the church moved from the lunar calendar to determining the date of Easter in relation to the vernal equinox. Thus, it was to fall on the Sunday after the full moon after the 14 Nisan. One of Constantine's key aims for the Council of Nicaea, according to Eusebius, was to get agreement on the date of Easter; in his letter to the churches after the Council he makes it clear that distinctiveness from Jewish practice and the unity of Christians are the principal issues (see *Vit. Const*. 3:18):

> In the first place it was decreed unworthy to observe that most sacred festival in accordance with the practice of the Jews … What could these people calculate correctly, when after the murder of the Lord, after that parricide, they have taken leave of their senses, and are moved not by rationale principle, but by uncontrolled impulse …?
>
> It is furthermore easy to see that in such an important matter, and for such a religious feast, it is wrong that there should be a discrepancy … how dreadful and unseemly it is, that on the same day some should be attending to their fasts while others are holding drinking parties … (Eusebius, *Vit. Const*. 3:18; Cameron and Hall 1999: 128–9)

The 'unanimous decision' of the bishops at Nicaea condemned the Quartodecimans as heretics; ironically their traditional, 'apostolic', Christian practice was now considered entirely Jewish in origin.

Eviatar Zerubavel (1982) has noted that the debate over the date of Easter was phrased in an entirely anti-Jewish framework and the aim was 'to totally dissociate the calendar'. The adoption of the Alexandrian dating system ensured that the two feasts could never coincide, and the complicated Christian solution—a feast which changes date every year according to a solar calendar—was, he says, 'most suggestive of the intimate link

between calendars and group identity' (Zerubavel 1982: 288). Clearly this is one issue in the emergence of a distinctive Christian festival but it does not obviously explain every aspect of it.

Ritualized Time and Symbolism

In early Christian ritualization of time we can see how the narrative of salvation, particularly in relation to Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection, became a template for the year but also provided an aetiology for the day and the week. One notes that this narrative of salvation is drawn from the gospels, and not from the Hebrew Scriptures or Acts. On the one hand, as Dario Zadra points out, the narrative provides thematic continuity so that the community moves through the narrative in 'real time' which is also symbolic or ritual time; the narrative is ordered chronologically (2005: 8918). In places, the ritual actions of the participants model those of Christ. These are not exact matches but are sufficient for the participants to believe they are sharing in the foundational event. Bell noted that

> Mircea Eliade drew attention to how the ritual reenactment of founding events is able to generate a meaningful, mythic, and cyclical sense of time, a temporal sense in which it is *as if the original events are happening all over again*. He thought this reenactment of sacred events released something of their original transformative power. (1997: 108; emphasis added)

She remarks how calendrical rituals shift between the historical and cosmic dimension and 'these calendrical systems exist only insofar as a rite evokes other rites to form a temporal series that molds time into a cycle of holy events and affords people the experience of some version of original events' (Bell 1997: 108).

This is particularly evident in the elaboration of the Holy Week ceremonies in Jerusalem by the end of the fourth century as described by Egeria. The whole week is modelled upon the events leading to the crucifixion and resurrection and the rituals are played out in the physical context of the city and its environs. Jerusalem was not the only city in which there were these 'stational liturgies'; John Baldovin's important study also describes those in Rome and Constantinople. In *The Urban Character of Christian Worship*, Baldovin aimed to show the essential commonality between the function and practice of stational liturgy in these three cities as they demonstrate the Christianization of late antique cities (see Latham, Chapter 40 in this volume). The differences between these cities are primarily to do with topography as worship develops 'in the dialectic between Christian faith and a particular social and cultural milieu' (Baldovin 1987: 234). But as his focus is on the impact of Christian ritual upon cities, he does not attend to the distinctive symbolic power of the liturgies in each city. Uniquely in Jerusalem, it was possible to achieve greater correlation by celebrating the ritual event in the very place

where it supposedly took place, enabling a more direct apprehension of the foundational historical event and the cosmic and salvific significance.

The commemorations begin on the Saturday before Palm Sunday when the community commemorates the raising of Lazarus; here the liturgy correlates event, place, and time. The bishop, clergy, and people assemble at Bethany because, Egeria says, 'They do it on this day because the Gospel describes what took place in Bethany "six days before the Passover", and it is six days from this Saturday to the Thursday night on which the Lord was arrested after the Supper' (*It. Eg.* 29.1; Wilkinson 1999: 151). Before arriving at the Lazarium in Bethany, the Jerusalem congregation was met by the Bethany congregation outside the town at 'the spot where Lazarus' sister Mary met the Lord'—thus there is an attempt to relate the narrative and the ritual actions quite closely. However, the participants are not simply reconstructing the biblical events because in the Lazarium the gospel reading continues with the 'announcement of Easter' (Pascha) and afterwards the participants return to the Anastasis (the place of the resurrection) for Lucinarium; the focus, therefore, remains continually on Christ's resurrection. So, although in the Jerusalem Holy Week ceremonies there is a desire to locate ritual events in the time and place of the gospel events, the congregation are in no doubt that these events only make sense in light of the resurrection. Throughout her account, Egeria comments on the verisimilitude of the readings, the rituals, and the place while also noting that these 'stational liturgies' end at the Anastasis. As Eliade noted, we can see that the 'dominant myth' does indeed dominate, and as Bell remarked, each individual calendrical rite derives its significance from its connections to others.

On Palm Sunday, the congregation meet on the Mount of Olives and after a reading about Christ's entry into Jerusalem,

> the bishop and all the people rise from their places and start off on foot down from the summit … All the people go before him with psalms and antiphons, all the time repeating 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord' … Everyone is carrying branches, either palm or olive, and they accompany the bishop in the very way the people did when once they went down the hill with the Lord. They go on foot all the way down the Mount to the city and all through the city to the Anastasis … (*It. Eg.* 31.2–4; Wilkinson 1999: 152)

As the week progresses, they hear Christ's teaching read from the gospels 'in the very place where he taught', identified as a cave below the summit of the Mount of Olives (the Eleona). The people gathered to listen to the gospels and homilies, as Christ gathered with his disciples. This emphasis on his teaching overrides some gospel events which later become significant: on Holy Thursday, for example, there is no foot-washing, and although a Eucharist takes place 'Behind the Cross' on this day only, Egeria does not explicitly connect it to the Last Supper. In later years, it is Sion which is identified as the Upper Room, the place of the Last Supper, but Egeria's congregation only goes there at Pentecost (see Day 2014). This confirms that the emphasis here is not on reconstructing the events through rituals, but on there being a minimal but sufficient correlation

between the original event and the ritual event to enable the participants to experience the former.

In the literature on stational liturgies, the focus of historians has naturally been upon reconstructing the routes, texts, and ritual performance as well as the impact upon the urban environment (see Baldovin 1987; and Latham, Chapter 40 in this volume). What has been lost is the way in which the embodied participation in the narrative of salvation impacts upon the participants of these liturgies, even though this has been studied for early Christian pilgrimage. In relation to this study of ritual time, movement through space creates 'time between' places such that 'time in' the narrative can be experienced. Unlike pilgrimage though, this time is hierarchically determined and communally affirmed.

Festivals and Ideology

The success of the Christian calendar as it developed was to anchor the ritual commemorations within an historical interpretation of the dominant narrative set out in scripture, primarily the gospels, and in the history of the local church. This gave authority and relevance to the community's celebration. But there are other forces at work in the controversy-laden church of late antiquity. We noted in passing how the hagiopolite feast of Encaenia commemorated the historical event of the dedication of the new church building, but its principal function was to demonstrate the close alliance between the emperor and the Jerusalem church during a period in which the latter claimed the same ecclesial authority as the five ancient patriarchates. The overt political ambitions are only partially hidden behind a demonstration of pious loyalty to the house of Constantine.

Anton Baumstark and Christine Morhmann introduced the concept of 'idea-feast' to account for feasts which were not historical commemorations, but were either instituted anew or were elaborations of existing feasts to explain and promote theological positions (see Roll 1995: 25). For Baumstark and Morhmann, this explained how the feast of the Epiphany was elaborated into a combined commemoration of the visit of the Magi, Jesus' baptism, and the miracle at Cana. As Roll also notes, 'idea-feasts' are more in evidence in the medieval period with the institution of the feasts of the Trinity and Corpus Christi in the West; however, she argues that the spread of Christmas from the fourth century should also be considered in the same light: a feast to reinforce the Nicene doctrine of the incarnation imposed from the 'top-down' (1995: 26–7, 165–211). The first concrete evidence for the feast is in the Roman Chronograph of 354 and about thirty years later we find John Chrysostom unsuccessfully urging his congregation to acknowledge the feast. Two theories had been common concerning the 'invention' of Christmas: the first, known as the History of Religions thesis, posited that the date, 25 December, was chosen to supplant a traditional solstice celebration; the other, the Calculation hypothesis, argued that the date was calculated from the feast of the

Annunciation on 25 March, nine months previously. Long considered a Roman invention, explained perhaps by the absence of a 6 January Epiphany feast, there are possible hints of it in North Africa earlier in the century, although the concrete evidence suggests it was not much earlier than 360–361 (for a full account of the various positions, see Bradshaw and Johnson 2011: 122–30; Roll 1995: 87–97, 127–47). Roll shows how the adoption of the feast was uneven throughout the East but that where it was promoted, it was as part of overt pro-Nicene rhetoric in cities riven by doctrinal factions. Thus in 380–381, Gregory Nazianzen explicitly counters Arian and Apollinarian doctrines in his sermon for Christmas. Chrysostom in Antioch in 386 (or 388) in his sermon *In diem natalem* urges the feast upon his listeners and provides three proofs of its importance related to the swift adoption of the feast and recent convincing demonstrations of the chronology of Christ's birth; this should be seen, though, in light of the surrounding sermons in which he asserts that the incarnation is the basis of all other feasts without expressly targeting his theological opponents. In Jerusalem, however, Christmas was kept only among Western Christians; the local church maintained its tradition of a pilgrimage to Bethlehem on 6 January as part of the Epiphany celebrations which endured until the onset of Marian theology after the council of Ephesus (Roll 1995: 189–95).

The origin of Christmas does not present itself as a response to a ritual imperative; the church functioned perfectly well for three and a half centuries without the need to celebrate Christ's birth in an exclusive way. Although it attaches to itself a period of preparation and extends to absorb Epiphany, it does not affect the weight given to the Easter cycle; unlike the more ancient feasts of Epiphany, Easter, and Pentecost, Christmas does not become a preferred feast for baptism. It remains a 'single-idea-feast' strongly rooted in history, without attracting the richer theological and salvific ideas of the others.

Some Final Reflections

Unlike other some ritual practices explored in this book, in which there is a distinction to be made between those able to participate fully and those excluded; the ritualization of time affects the unbaptized as much as the baptized. No restrictions can be placed upon private hours of prayer or outdoor communal celebrations; and indeed as Christianity takes on an increasingly public role in the late fourth and fifth centuries, even non-Christians would be subject to its organization of time—be it imperial laws for the observance of Sunday or the ritual invasion of the city by Christian festivals (see Latham, Chapter 40 in this volume).

In order to examine the effect of this ritualization of time, I have found it helpful to apply the insights of Douglas J. Davies in his (2011) book, *Emotion, Identity, and Religion: Hope, Reciprocity, and Otherness*. Here, he does not so much examine the elements of individual rituals, as explore their effect and, in particular, the way in which ritual, emotion, memory, and identity combine to generate meaningful events. Rituals promote the shared values of the group by transforming individual feelings into

validated emotions, either through participation or instruction. They embed the values and narrative of the group, such that at moments of crisis, what he calls 'identity depletion', originating either ritually or socially, it is the ritual memory which is available to direct their responses and actions. The role of emotion in directing action and response is important as the emotions do not simply well up from some deep place in the human psyche but are 'expected'.

What makes Egeria's account of the liturgical cycle in Jerusalem so interesting is not just that she orders the ritual events sequentially during the day, the week, and the year and provides information about the liturgical celebrations, but also that in some cases she comments on the physical and emotional response to them. The account reveals her memories of the experience of ritual participation and we sense their impact. Thus, at Epiphany she describes with wonder the decorations in the basilica: the gold, gems, and 'the hangings are entirely silk with gold stripes, the curtains the same, and everything they use for services at the festival is made of gold and jewels' (*It. Eg.* 25.7; Wilkinson 1999: 146). On the Wednesday of Holy Week, during the reading of the gospel concerning Jesus' betrayal by Judas Iscariot, 'The people groan and lament at this reading in a way that would make you weep to hear them' (*It. Eg.* 34; Wilkinson 1999: 153). And again at the reading of Jesus' arrest in the church at Gethsemane, 'By the time it has been read everyone is groaning and lamenting and weeping so loud that people even across in the city can probably hear it all' (*It. Eg.* 36.3; Wilkinson 1999: 154). Additionally the people are fatigued by long processions from the Mount of Olives or from the length of the vigils, such as that of the night procession with candles from the Mount to the Holy Sepulchre at Pentecost: 'It is quite a way from the gate to the Great Church, the Martyrium, and they arrive there at about eight at night, going very slowly all the way so that the walk does not make the people tired' (*It. Eg.* 43.7; Wilkinson 1999: 160). These are striking inclusions given that Egeria gives little precise detail about memorable words and chants, except to say repeatedly that they were appropriate to the time and the day. But, in these descriptions of the major festivals we note how the physical and emotional aspects of the ritual became embedded in the memory of the participants, individually and collectively. From year to year, the repetition of the festal cycle reinforces not just the theological significance, but also ways of moving and being moved that become ritual components of each particular event.

Catherine Bell emphasizes how the whole cycle influences human life and not just the individual feasts and fasts within it; ritualizing time enables humans to consider themselves as time-bound, even as the events commemorated situate the participants outside present time—invariably to the past, but also orientated to a future. Chrysostom makes this very point:

> And while these celebrations (on earth) are often finished at midday, the celebration in heaven isn't like that: it doesn't wait for periods of months, or cycles of years, or a number of days, but it takes place continually, and all the blessings it contains don't have an end, it knows no conclusion, it can't be out of date or lose its effectiveness—it's not subject to age or death. (*Philog.*; Mayer and Allen 2002: 188)

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CHAPTER 33

EARLY CHRISTIAN PRAYER

L. EDWARD PHILLIPS

Introduction

The act of addressing a god in praise, confession, or supplication is found in virtually every religion that made up the Graeco-Roman world of the early church. It is not surprising, therefore, that early Christian practices exhibit some continuity with prior religious cultures. Christians generally stood to pray, but so did Jews, and for that matter Greeks (Pulleyn 1997: 190). Moreover, as habitual activity, the practices of prayer, such as physical gesture and daily patterns, are resistant to change.

As to expressive meaning, however, at least as described in the writings of educated Christians, daily prayer attracted distinctive theological references to the Trinity and biblical examples drawn from both the Septuagint and the New Testament. Indeed, the patristic sources exhibit a range of justifications and explanations for the practices of prayer. As Basil of Caesarea notes: 'We all pray facing East, but few realize that we do this because we are seeking Paradise, our old fatherland, which God planted in the East of Eden. We all stand for prayer on Sunday, but not everyone knows why' (*Spir*. 27; Anderson 1980: 100 [altered]). Already in the fourth century, Basil makes an observation about the performance of ritual that Fritz Staal will address in the late twentieth century: 'A widespread but erroneous assumption about ritual is that it consists in symbolic activities which refer to something else … There are no symbolic meanings going through their minds when they are engaged in performing ritual' (1979: 3). Along this line, Pierre Bourdieu comments:

> Rites are practices that are ends in themselves, that are justified by their very performance; things that one does because they are 'the done thing' … they may have, strictly speaking, neither meaning nor function, other than the function implied in their very existence. (1990: 18)

Basil, of course, playing the role of the educated leader of the church, thought he had discovered why Christians performed actions such as facing east or standing; as Robert

McCauley and Thomas Lawson observe, even though ritual need not express conscious meaning, 'In some religious systems interpretations may flourish and become resources for sophisticated theological speculation among the intellectual elite' (2002: 36). Early Christianity was such a religious system, and Basil was definitely among the elite, educated class. His acknowledgement that many do not know the reasons for their actions illustrates the problem of ritual meaning for the unschooled believer for whom ritual is rarely a consciously 'meaningful' activity.

Prayer, however, is a very broad concept, and some forms of praying might be characterized as religious activity, but not, strictly speaking, as ritual activity (McCauley and Lawson 2002: 13). Jeremy Penner notes that there are two fundamentally distinctive ways of praying. The first type is spontaneous prayer, 'performed according to the will, emotion, and particular circumstances of the one praying'. The second type is marked by 'formality and ritual' (Penner 2012: 1). To this dichotomy may be added another: some prayers take place more-or-less privately, while other prayers are performed in community. By considering these dichotomies, specific practices of prayer can be plotted in two dimensions along two scales: 1. communal/private and 2. spontaneous/formal (Figure 33.1).

Examples of private-spontaneous prayer would include unscripted requests for divine assistance such as Paul's prayer for healing of the 'thorn in the flesh' (2 Cor. 12:8). The recitation of the *Shema* and attendant prayers and the devotional use of the Lord's Prayer (as in Did. 8.2–3) could fall in the upper-right quadrant, private/formal. The practice of glossolalia described by Paul in 1 Cor. 14 is an example of communal/spontaneous prayer, remarkable also for the way that Paul attempts to impose some formality, pushing it towards the communal/formal quadrant. It should be noted that these scales are a continuum of 'more-or-less', rather than polar opposites. Completely spontaneous, private prayer may be theoretically possible, but in practice even spontaneous prayer will tend to default to communally determined habits of gesture and terminology. And even the most rigorously formal communal prayers are rarely immune to subtle spontaneous enhancements by the individuals who pray them, which is one of the many ways liturgical practices evolve over time (see Aune, Chapter 14 in this volume).

By the fourth century, Christian ascetical communities have formed around rules that standardize the times and content of daily prayer. This chapter, however,

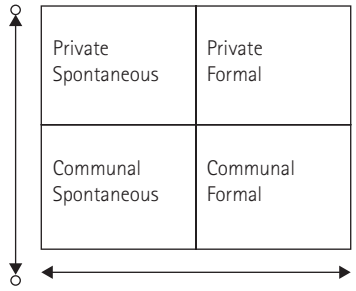

FIGURE 33.1 A two-dimensional typology of prayer

examines the development of daily prayer among ordinary Christian believers. While it is difficult to determine with certainty the quotidian habits among the majority of early Christians, we can with care determine some structures that gave ritual shape to daily prayer. Patristic treatises on prayer and the early church orders do not so much describe what Christians in a particular place were doing as prescribe what they ought to be doing. Generally, these prescriptions attempt to move the prayer from the upper left private/spontaneous quadrant into the lower right communal/formal quadrant. This move towards ritual form entailed the development of temporal patterns for daily prayer, the standardization of gestures, and the establishment of communal boundaries.

Prayer at Set Times of the Day

The Jewish Background

In the late second century CE, Clement of Alexandria noted that the wise Christian 'prays throughout his whole life', and further commented, 'Each place, then, and time in which we entertain the idea of God, is in reality sacred' (*Strom*. 7.7.40.3; ANF 2: 534). Early Christians did not seem to limit the times or places for prayer. Indeed, the Apostle Paul admonished the church in Thessaloniki to 'Pray without ceasing' (1 Thess. 5:17). Even so, Christians as early as the New Testament period also marked the life of ceaseless prayer with reference to specific hours of the day. Peter received a vision during his prayer at the sixth hour (Acts 10:9ff.), and Peter and John went up to the Temple to pray at the ninth hour of the day (Acts 3:1). In the first example Peter is praying alone, and so the reference to the noon hour may be incidental. In the second example, the ninth hour was the time of the daily evening sacrifice, a public event.

Since the mid-twentieth century, liturgical historians have looked to Jewish roots for the temporal pattern of Christian daily prayer. The difficulty here is that the sources for Jewish prayers in the first century are open to various interpretations. C. W. Dugmore (1944), drawing on the Mishnah (*c*.200 CE) and from even later Talmudic sources, found the origin of Christian morning and evening prayer in the practice of the synagogue, which was in turn based on the pattern of the morning and evening sacrifices in the Jerusalem Temple. Dugmore's ground-breaking work, however, has not continued to find wide acceptance. Jewish historians today acknowledge that there is little evidence for public daily prayer in first-century synagogues, either in Palestine or in the Diaspora (Bradshaw 1992: 24). Shemaryahu Talmon has further suggested that the absence of the text of any public prayers in early rabbinic sources indicates a suppression of institutionalized prayer, though this argument from silence may overstate the case (1989: 207–8).

For Jerusalem and its environs, the primary location of public worship was, of course, the Temple. The Jews of Jerusalem observed daily sacrifices, morning and evening (Acts

3:1), though not as prayer services per se, for the Temple ritual did not contain formal prayers for those in attendance. The connection of public prayers to the sacrifice was informal and thematic rather than fixed. The time of sacrifice merely provided 'an auspicious time to pray', both inside and outside the Temple. But while the Temple was still standing, the actual content of such prayers was spontaneous and supplementary. It was only after the destruction of the Temple that a formal substitution of prayer for sacrifice developed in rabbinic thought (Penner 2012: 69–72).

For obvious practical reasons, the Temple was not the only venue for prayer. Christians and Jews also prayed in domestic settings. Christian prayers in their house churches might have been a continuation of Jewish private and domestic worship, though this is highly speculative since we do not have an abundance of evidence for Jewish domestic ritual, or how domestic ritual intersected with private obligations. There is no clear warrant for any sort of domestic daily prayer ritual in the Hebrew Bible; nonetheless, later rabbinic tradition did formalize prayer. Jewish private prayers would have included the recitation of the *Shema*, which is construed in the Mishnah as a private rather than public obligation (m. Ber. 1:1–5). Yet, even the evidence for a fixed *Shema* liturgy in the first century CE is more ambiguous than commonly assumed, as Penner demonstrates from this passage in Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*:

> Twice each day, both at its beginning and when the hour comes for turning to sleep, bear witness (*martureo*) to God of the gifts that He granted them when they were delivered from the land of the Egyptians, since gratitude (*eucharistia*) is proper by nature: it is given in return for those things that have already occurred and as a stimulus for what will be. (*Ant*. 4:212; Feldman 2000, cited in Penner 2012: 81)

This short description of daily prayer in the morning and evening alludes to the warrant for the *Shema,* but does not suggest a fixed *Shema* liturgy focused exclusively on Deut. 6:4–7. Rather, Josephus gives a broad thematic range of thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) for the deliverance from Egypt (Penner 2012: 81–7).

The form of Judaism associated with the Temple in Jerusalem, however, does not represent the whole picture of Jewish prayer rituals, even in Palestine. Recent developments in scholarship on the liturgical materials in the Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, continue to be investigated by Jewish and Christian liturgical scholars. It is no longer widely accepted that the scrolls are altogether sectarian literature, or that the Covenanters of Qumran represented an extremely marginalized sect. Some of the literature, such as the biblical texts, is obviously not narrowly sectarian. The scrolls also contain non-biblical material that does not exhibit any obvious sectarian features. And in the case of some texts which do have sectarian features, these may be adapted from sources which otherwise appear quite 'mainstream' (Newsome 1990).

The scrolls contain evidence of more than one liturgical system: blessings for each day of a month (4Q503), a liturgy for each day of the week (4Q504–506), and also private and communal thanksgiving hymns ($1QH^{a-b}$; $4QH^{a-f}$) which may have been used at the daily services. The existence of these overlapping systems of public and private prayers,

blessings, and thanksgivings, indicates that the scrolls were probably not intended to be the fixed liturgy of a single community. Rather, as Esther Chazon has argued, some of the prayers for a daily office at Qumran must have come from outside that community. She does not propose a specific *Sitz im Leben* for these prayers in the first century, nor does she offer conclusions regarding the extent of their use outside Qumran. Yet, she does find parallels between the Qumran texts and later rabbinic prayers, and concludes that prayers of the type found at Qumran 'were considered important enough to be incorporated into the liturgy that was institutionalized by the Rabbis …' (Chazon 1998: 257). The scrolls, in her assessment. provide the 'first direct evidence of fixed public prayer outside of Qumran during the Second Temple period' (Chazon 1998: 284).

The Qumran prayer liturgies are not particularly associated with the Temple sacrifice, as in later rabbinic prayer, but rather are correlate with the daily appearance of the luminaries, the sun, moon, and stars. In addition to texts pertaining to morning and evening prayer, the so-called 'Psalm of Appointed Time' (1QS XI:26B–X.3a, and its parallel 1QH XII.4–7) provides a poetic description of a cycle of prayer:

> 9.26 He will bless him
> 10:1 with the times that he decreed,
> at the commencement of the dominion of light,
> during its rotation
> and when retired to its appointed abode.
> At the commencement of the vigils of darkness …
> and in his rotation
> and when it retires before the light. (Watson 1994: 14, adapted)

Talmon interpreted this passage as illustrating a prayer cycle of *six* times of daily prayer (Talmon 1989). Other, more recent scholars have argued that 1QS X:1–3a is a poetic description of sunrise and sunset (e.g. Falk 1998). Paul Bradshaw (1982: 4–11) proposed a pattern of *four* times of prayer, morning, noon, evening and midnight, by proposing that the beginning and ending of day/night overlap in the cycle. Penner also makes a case for the four times, with the 'rotation' in the middle of the day and night corresponding to the blessing prayer of the mid-day meal and nocturnal prayer (2012: 141–52).

This brief description of the various systems of Jewish daily prayer in the first century CE shows a complex ritual world. As Robert Taft has commented, 'the Jewish precedents for Christian prayer times appear much more muddled than they are sometimes made to seem' (2004: 6). Some Jews associated daily prayer with the Temple sacrifices, and there is evidence some Christians did so as well. Some Jews justified practices by reference to scripture, inventing warrants for the institution of daily prayer by reference to Deut. 6:4–7, or the story of the Exodus. Christians will similarly find warrant for prayer by reference to the Jewish scriptures and, from the early third century, by reference to Christian scripture. And just as the Qumran community connected daily prayer to the angelic hosts, some Christian descriptions of daily prayer will see a connection to the cosmic, heavenly liturgy. Thus, in addition to our evidence of two types of prayer, communal and private, we have evidence of three systems of public prayer:(1) the Temple

system connected directly to the sacrifices; (2) the emerging system of daily recitation of the *Shema* with prayers; and (3) the Qumran system, which tied prayer to the 'course of the luminaries' (i.e. the rising and setting of the sun).

These three systems were not only different thematically, they also have significant differences with regard to the discrete times of prayer. The daily prayer described by Josephus took place at the beginning of the day (sunrise) and at bedtime. The Qumran community (following the analysis of Bradshaw and Penner) observed morning and evening prayer according to the rising and setting of the sun, plus at noon and midnight. The official Temple cult, on the other hand, made the morning sacrifice probably somewhat later than dawn (just how late is not certain). The evening sacrifice began at the ninth hour of the day, which is three in the afternoon, an historical fact noted in Acts 3:1 and confirmed by Josephus (*Ant*. 14:65).

A particularly pious Jew who honoured all three systems would pray seven times during the day (Table 33.1).

While we do not have evidence of any Jew or Christian actually praying at all of these times in the first century, such a conflation of patterns may underlie the later Jewish pattern that combines a thrice-daily praying of the *Tefillah* (the Eighteen Benedictions) with a twice-daily recitation of the *Shema*. The morning and evening *Shema* correspond with the morning and evening *Tefillah*, while the afternoon *Tefillah* corresponds to the time of the evening sacrifice (Zahavy 1991).

After the destruction of the Temple and the ascetic community at Qumran, the formal performance of the rites associated with these locations was no longer possible, but habits of prayer at these sites at specific times of the day continued. It is reasonable to assume that private and spontaneous prayers (the upper-left quadrant of the chart in Figure 33.1) were subconsciously influenced by the social habits that organized the day according to two or more systems, all of which constitutes the available religious repertoire. As the rabbis codified these times of prayer into formal communal standards in the Mishnah (m. Ber. 1:1–2), moving towards the right side of the chart (Figure 33.1),

Table 33.1 Jewish systems of daily prayer in the first century CE

Temple	Josephus	Qumran/(Essene?)
	Sunrise	Sunrise
Morning sacrifice around 9 a.m. (?)		
		Midday meal prayer
Evening sacrifice at 3 p.m.		
		Prayer at sunset
	Prayer at bedtime	
		Prayer at midnight

the regulations probably formalized what already seemed to the typical pious Jews to be proper, expected practice.

The Hours of Christian Daily Prayer in the Second and Third Centuries

The establishment of prayer as discrete hours of the day and night presupposes concepts for keeping time as divisions of the night and day, and this has varied across cultures. Some divisions are natural, such as sunrise, sunset, and even cockcrow. Others are established through cultural practice, but become standard (Holford-Strevens 2005: 2–9). In Jewish culture, the day began in the evening at sunset, and the night was divided into watches (Lam. 2:19, for example), though the number of watches does not appear to be standardized. By the first century CE, Graeco-Roman practice of four night watches will exert influence, and thus Mark 13:35, for example, indicates a four-fold division of watches: evening, midnight, cockcrow, and dawn, based on the natural division of the night.

The Hebrew Bible does not have a system of dividing the night and the day into discrete hours, and even as late as the Mishnah, the discussion of proper times for prayer included natural observations, such as when one has enough light to distinguish different colours of wool (m. Ber. 1.1). But by the first century CE, the Graeco-Roman practice of numbering divisions of the day and night into twelve hours had become common. Josephus makes numerous references to particular hours of the day or night, including his observation already noted that the evening sacrifice began at the ninth hour. The gospels also refer to twelve hours of the day, not only in descriptions of the crucifixion of Jesus (Mark 15:21–34), but also in the teaching of Jesus: 'Are there not twelve hours of daylight?' (John 11:9). In the parable of the workers, Jesus refers to the division of the working day into early morning, the third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hours, with the last being one hour before quitting time at the twelfth hour (Matt. 20:1–16). This does suggest at least some informal division of the workday into groups of three-hour blocks.

The earliest witness to Christian daily prayer as an established pattern is Did. 8, which prescribes the recitation of the Lord's Prayer three times a day; however, it does not specify discrete times for these prayers. Clement of Alexandria, around the year 200 CE is the first Christian source to make explicit reference to times for prayer, specifically at the third, sixth, and ninth hours: 'Now, if some assign definite hours for prayer—as, for example, the third, and sixth, and ninth—yet the Gnostic prays throughout his whole life, endeavouring by prayer to have fellowship with God' (*Strom*. 7.7.40.3; ANF 2: 534). Clement offers a theological explanation for the pattern: 'But the distribution of the hours into a threefold division, honoured with as many prayers, is known by those who are acquainted with the blessed triad [*triada*] of the holy mansions' (*Strom*. 7.7.40.3; trans. altered), though it is not clear if Clement intends this to be an allusion to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But Clement does not limit prayer to three times, for he

references Ps. 119:164, 'Seven times a day have I praised Thee', as the practice of 'the elect race'. Clement further mentions prayer at various other times, especially at meals: 'His [the gnostic's] sacrifices are prayer, and praise, and readings in the Scriptures before meals, and psalms and hymns during meals and before bed, and prayers again during the night' (*Strom*. 7.7.49.4). It is possible that Clement intends a pattern of morning, noon, and evening prayer corresponding to the three daily mealtimes, along with prayer at bedtime and at night (Bradshaw 1982: 48). Yet, the goal for the gnostic, Clement states, is to be in a prayerful disposition in all things: 'But while engaged in walking, in conversation, while in silence, while engaged in reading and in works according to reason, he in every mood prays' (*Strom*. 7.7.49.7). The gnostic goes beyond these fixed times for prayer observed by the ordinary believer. It is significant that the only day hours given by Clement, and presumably those practised by the typical Christian, are the three-hour blocks of third, sixth, and ninth hours.

Around the year 235, Origen, also from Alexandria, but living in Caesarea, Palestine, wrote a treatise, *On Prayer,* that indicates some knowledge of the practices described by Clement. The goal is still to 'pray without ceasing', and the minimal standard for is prayer three times during the day, for which Origen provides biblical precedent:

> Of such prayer, part is what is usually called 'prayer,' and ought not to be performed less than three times each day. This is clear from the practice of Daniel, who, when great danger threatened him, prayed three times a day [Dan. 6:10]. And Peter, going up to the housetop to pray about the sixth hour, at which time also he saw the vessel let down from heaven, let down by the four corners [Acts 10:9–11], gives an example of the middle of the three times of prayer spoken of by David before him: 'In the morning thou shalt hear my prayer; in the morning will I stand beside thee, and will look unto thee' [Ps. 5:3]. The last of these three is indicated in the words, 'the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice' [Ps. 141.2]. But not even the time of night shall we rightly pass without such prayer, for David says, 'At midnight I rose to give thanks unto thee because of their righteous judgments' [Ps. 119:62], and Paul, as related in the acts of the Apostles, at midnight together with Silas at Philippi prayed and sang praises unto God, so that the prisoners also heard them [Acts 16:25]. (*Or*. 12.1; Jay 1954: 115)

Origen cites Dan. 6:10 as a warrant for praying three times, and he then cites selected psalms and stories from the Acts of the Apostles to justify the second and third times of prayer. He also includes a warrant for prayer during the night, yielding a pattern of four times of prayer each day. Bradshaw proposed that Origen was describing a fourfold daily pattern of morning, noon, evening, and midnight prayer, similar to the practice of the community at Qumran (Bradshaw 1982: 48–9, 62–4). There is enough ambiguity in this text to allow for this interpretation, since Origen does not explicitly mention a discrete time for either the first or the third prayer; however, he explains the third hour with evening sacrifice of Ps. 141:2. Origen no doubt knew that the hour of the evening sacrifice was at the ninth hour of the day (Acts 3:1). Instead of prayer at sunrise and sunset, the simpler explanation is that Origen had in mind the same day hours mentioned by

Clement, at the third, sixth, and ninth hours, to which he specifically adds prayer at midnight. Nevertheless, for Origen this is still a minimum standard in a life of ceaseless prayer.

In his treatise, *On Prayer,* Tertullian, likewise, begins his discussion of the times of prayer by asserting that there is no rule other than to pray at every time and place (*Or*. 24). Nevertheless, he argues that it is still a good practice to pray at fixed times:

> Touching the time, however, the extrinsic observance of certain hours will not be unprofitable—those common hours, I mean, which mark the intervals of the day—the third, the sixth, the ninth—which we may find in the Scriptures to have been more solemn than the rest. (*Or*. 25; ANF 4:108)

Following this claim, he provides proof-texts from the Acts of the Apostles: Pentecost at the third hour; Peter on the rooftop at noon; Peter and John going to the Temple at the ninth hour. He then references the three daily prayers in Dan. 6:10. And, finally, he associates the three times of daily prayer with the three persons of the Trinity, a theological warrant for the practice of 'three', similar to Clement's 'triad'. After his vigorous apology for the day hours, he reminds his readers of the 'regular prayers which are due, without any admonition, on the entrance of light and of night'. These are the natural, or logical, times when the Christian will pray without any special pleading. In short, Tertullian employs a fascinatingly wide range of scriptural, theological, and even natural explanations for specific times of prayer.

A few years later, Cyprian of Carthage, in his own treatise on prayer, will expand the typological significance of the pattern of 'three' into an even more vigorous Trinitarian typology:

> And in discharging the duties of prayer, we find that the three children with Daniel, being strong in faith and victorious in captivity, observed the third, sixth, and ninth hour, as it were, for a sacrament of the Trinity, which in the last times had to be manifested. For both the first hour in its progress to the third shows forth the consummated number of the Trinity, and also the fourth proceeding to the sixth declares another Trinity; and when from the seventh the ninth is completed, the perfect Trinity is numbered every three hours, which spaces of hours the worshippers of God in time past having spiritually decided on, made use of for determined and lawful times for prayer. And subsequently the thing was manifested, that these things were of old Sacraments, in that anciently righteous men prayed in this manner. For upon the disciples at the third hour the Holy Spirit descended, who fulfilled the grace of the Lord's promise. Moreover, at the sixth hour, Peter, going up unto the house-top, was instructed as well by the sign as by the word of God admonishing him to receive all to the grace of salvation, whereas he was previously doubtful of the receiving of the Gentiles to baptism. And from the sixth hour to the ninth, the Lord, being crucified, washed away our sins by His blood; and that He might redeem and quicken us, He then accomplished His victory by His passion. (*Dom. or*. 34: ANF 5: 457)

For scriptural support, he cites Dan. 6:10, and also the stories in Acts for the third and sixth hours. For the ninth hour, Cyprian appeals to the chronology of the crucifixion rather than Acts 3:1. Like Origen and Tertullian, he acknowledges these day hours as the more ancient pattern, used at least from the time of Daniel. To these day hours, Cyprian adds prayer at sunrise and sunset:

> But for us, beloved brethren, besides the hours of prayer observed of old, both the times and the sacraments have now increased in number. For we must also pray in the morning, that the Lord's resurrection may be celebrated by morning prayer … Also at the sun setting and at the decline of day, of necessity we must pray again. For since Christ is the true sun and the true day … as the worldly sun and worldly day depart, when we pray and ask that light may return to us again, we pray for the advent of Christ, which shall give us the grace of everlasting light. (*Dom. or*. 35; ANF 5: 457)

And, finally, prayer during the night: 'Let not us, then, who are in Christ—that is, always in the light—cease from praying even during night. Thus the widow Anna, without intermission praying and watching, persevered in deserving well of God' (*Dom. or*. 36; ANF 5: 457). It should be noted that Clement, Origen, Tertullian, and Cyprian all extol prayer in the middle of the night. Tertullian even comments that he is blessed to have a wife who will rise with him (*Ux*. 2.6), a practice also described in *Apostolic Tradition* 41.12 for prayer at midnight. This was not an extraordinary expectation. Sleep in two nightly segments divided at midnight for an hour or two was a common practice before the modern period (Ekirch 2005: 300–3).

The most detailed description of daily prayer in the pre-Constantinian church is found in *Trad. ap.* 41. Consequently, this text is frequently cited as typical of the early Christian pattern. *Trad. ap*. 41, however, exhibits several problematic features and even the text itself is difficult to establish with any certainty (Bradshaw, Johnson, and Phillips 2002: 194–210). The description of morning prayer directs the faithful to attend the morning catechetical meeting and seems to privilege study over prayer, even when there is no catechetical gathering. Evening prayer seems to be absent, though there is a brief direction for prayer at bedtime. The description of prayer at midnight is extensive, and suggests a cosmic, angelic liturgy similar to the Qumran morning and evening prayers. But, perhaps what is most striking about the horarium in *Trad. ap*. 41 is the absence of any mention of Dan. 6:10, nor is there any reference to the obvious hours of prayer mentioned in Acts. Instead, the controlling symbol for the day hours is the Marcan chronology of the crucifixion. Other idiosyncratic features include a reference to the Temple shewbread as a 'type' for the third hour, and the death and resurrection of Christ as a 'type' for the ninth hour. And, finally, it describes prayer at cockcrow, a time otherwise first associated with monastic practice, and which may be a later addition to the text (Bradshaw, Johnson, and Phillips 2002: 194–213). Thus, *Trad. ap*. 41 has little in common thematically with the other second- and third-century witnesses. It does share with these witnesses, however, an emphasis on prayer at the third, sixth, ninth hours, and at midnight.

Several common themes emerge from this overview. First, Clement, Origen, Tertullian, and Cyprian all suggest that the three day hours are the standard, minimal practice, and even the horarium of *Trad. ap*. 41 shows a more clearly developed set of day hours than hours for morning or evening. The origin of this is unclear, but the incidental references to the day hours scattered throughout the New Testament, combined with the stability of the practice, suggest that J. H. Walker is correct in her observation that the day hours of *terce, sext*, and *none* are apostolic (1962). Second, there is a pattern of morning and evening prayer, tied to the rising and setting sun, a pattern which Josephus describes, and which Qumran specifically links to the luminaries. This is not peculiar to late antique Jews or Christians since prayer at sunrise and sunset can be found among the Greeks (Pulleyn 1997: 157). Third, there is an emphasis on prayer in the middle of the night.

In short, what emerges is something like a conflation of the three patterns of Jewish prayer identified by Penner, and discussed above. But this conflation does not seem to be intentional so much as simply inevitable. If the goal was a life of constant prayer punctuated by distinct times, then the times themselves are merely conveniences, or reminders, or waking in the middle of the night anyway, or wanting protection before going to sleep, and so forth. Christians prayed at sunrise because the sun was up, and that could be reason enough. Yet preachers and theologians who had time to ponder such actions would soon find biblical and thematic reasons for the connection: the rising sun is a type of Christ's resurrection (Cyprian, *Dom. or*. 35). The explanations might be historically arbitrary but, nonetheless, evocative of divine purpose. Educated leaders, and probably not a few uneducated believers, made the connections because the practice was already there waiting to be interpreted. By proposing typological or scriptural precedents and interpretations, patristic commentators were attempting to give affective, imaginative depth to habitual practice that was forever in danger of drifting into the banal through sheer repetition (McCauley and Lawson 2002: 50). By doing so, they were formalizing, at least thematically, what ordinary Christians simply knew as the times to pray, implicitly shifting from the private/spontaneous to the communal/formal in the dialectic between popular religious habits and emerging official Christian religion.

The Gestures and Postures of Early Christian Prayer

There is a similar process of thematic interpretation of the various gestures and postures of prayer. Greeks and Jews typically stood for prayer with outstretched hands (see Aune, Chapter 14 in this volume), as did Jews (m. Ber. 1.3). In some instances kneeling was acceptable, notably during prayers of penitence or distress, both for spontaneous personal prayer (Jesus in Gethsemane, Luke 22:41), in spontaneous group settings (Paul kneeling to pray with church leaders in Ephesus, Acts 20:36), and in ritual settings (Phillips

2008: 48–51). Christians will adopt these practices, but the patristic commentators will give them distinctive theological interpretations.

In 325, the Council of Nicaea attempted to standardize the practice in canon 20:

> Forasmuch as there are certain persons who kneel on the Lord's Day and in the days of Pentecost (i.e., the Fifty Days of Easter), therefore, to the intent that all things may be uniformly observed everywhere (in every parish), it seems good to the holy Synod that prayer be made to God standing. (*NPNF*^{2} 14)

However, the reason for this canon seems to be that various Christian communities did not adhere to a single practice regarding standing and kneeling.

Tertullian is the first Christian authority to discuss the appropriateness posture for prayer. In *On Prayer*, he comments at some length:

> In the matter of kneeling also, prayer is subject to diversity of observance, through the act of some few who abstain from kneeling on the Sabbath; and since this dissension is particularly on its trial before the churches, the Lord will give His grace that the dissentients may either yield, or else indulge their opinion without offence to others. We, however (just as we have received), only on the day of the Lord's Resurrection ought to guard not only against kneeling, but every posture and office of solicitude; deferring even our businesses lest we give any place to the devil. Similarly, too, in the period of Pentecost; which period we distinguish by the same solemnity of exultation. But who would hesitate every day to prostrate himself before God, at least in the first prayer with which we enter on the daylight? At fasts, moreover, and Stations, no prayer should be made without kneeling, and the remaining customary marks of humility; for (then) we are not only praying, but deprecating, and making satisfaction to God our Lord. (*Or. 23*; ANF 3: 689; see also *Cor*. 3)

For Tertullian, kneeling is prohibited on the Lord's Day each week, and on every day from Easter to Pentecost. Otherwise, kneeling is the acceptable posture at the early morning prayer and during fasting.

According to Origen, Christians should stand during prayer with eyes elevated and hands extended, though he allows for sitting in the case of illness. Kneeling is the preferred posture for the confession of sin (*Or*. 31.2, 3). Cyprian assumes that standing is the normal posture for prayer without comment (*Dom. or*. 31). The *Apostolic Tradition* and the church orders derived from it allude to standing for prayer at public meetings (*Trad. ap*. 18.2 and parallels in *Test. Dom*. 2.4), but these directions come with minimal rationale.

As noted above, in the late fourth century, Basil of Caesarea wrote that Christians stand, kneel, and face east to pray as a matter of habit, rather than out of deep understanding of the practice:

> We all stand for prayer on Sunday, but not everyone knows why. We stand for prayer on the day of the Resurrection to remind ourselves of the graces we have been

> given: not only because we have been raised with Christ and are obliged to seek the things that are above, but also because Sunday seems to be an image of the age to come. Moreover every time we fall upon our knees and rise from off them we show by the very deed that by our sin we fell down to earth, and by the loving kindness of our Creator were called back to heaven. (*Spir*. 27.66; Anderson 1980)

Tertullian only inferred a connection to the resurrection, but Basil argues that standing embodies in the believer a mimetic interpretation of Christ's resurrection and the expectation of an eternal eschatological Sabbath. By such habits believers enact their relationship to God. The meaning of these habitual practices, however, is discovered *post facto* by the careful reader of scripture.

Habitual practices were also challenged through scriptural interpretation. For example, the Letter of Aristeas (mid-second century BCE) describes a Jewish practice of washing hands before prayer (Let. Aris. 305–6). Centuries later, *Trad. ap*. 41 admonished Christians to wash their hands before prayer after rising from bed. Tertullian also acknowledged the practice, but opposed it as unnecessary. Christians, he argued, are already cleansed of any defilement through baptism. Furthermore, hand-washing evokes the story of Pilate at the trial of Jesus, and this is not a practice to be emulated by Christians (*Or*. 13).

Christians were also concerned about veiling the head during prayer. In 1 Cor. 11:5–7, Paul argues that women must cover their heads while men must not. He even refers to 'nature' as the justification for this gender difference as if it were a widely accepted custom, though Roman men were known to cover their heads for prayer. Tertullian argues for the veiling of women, again citing 1 Cor. 11:5 as justification (*Or*. 22). Tertullian offers modesty as a rationale, but he also provides an anecdote of a woman who felt on her bare neck the touch of angel who found her to be a temptation. He, furthermore, notes with disapproval women who cover their heads with 'a fringe, or a tuft, or any thread whatever' or even 'the palm of the hand,' during prayer, rather than a full veil (*Virg*. 17). Tertullian's argument suggests that women tend to relax the rules of headdress during private prayer, but he extends the rules for the assembly even into the private sphere.

Several witnesses indicate that Christians made a sign of a cross before prayer. *Trad. ap*. 41.14 instructs the believers to sign themselves before prayer at midnight using 'moist breath', which suggests a connection to baptism. The actual shape of this sign may have been Greek letter *chi*, the first letter of *Christos,* or it might have been a Hebrew letter *thaw,* with reference to Ezekiel 9:4, 'put a mark on the foreheads of those who sigh and groan . . .' (Nodet and Taylor 1999: 300–5). The sign of the cross, however, was not limited to prayer. Origen, for example, indicates that the sign should be made before any task, though he specifically mentions prayer (*Sel. Ezech*. 3.801).

Standing to pray, arms outstretched, kneeling, hands washed, and heads covered/uncovered are all practices found in the Graeco-Roman and Jewish cultural background of local Christian communities. Even the sign of the cross traced on the forehead may have a Jewish origin. Through overt theological and biblical association, Christian authorities claimed and interpreted these already-established cultural practices for Christian ends.

Prayer and Communal Boundaries

Before the fourth century the hours of daily prayer seem to have been, for the most part, private or domestic. Tertullian possibly alludes to communal gatherings in his comments on the use of antiphonal psalmody by some especially pious Christians (*Or.* 27). *Trad. ap.*, as noted, does refer explicitly to communal prayer at morning gatherings. Yet, even though prayer was typically made privately, or with family members, this does not mean that the daily prayers of ordinary believers did not begin to accrue some standard content. Origen, Tertullian, and Cyprian all discuss the times of prayer in treatises that include expositions of the Lord's Prayer. As Cyprian comments, the use of the first person plural in the Lord's Prayer indicates that 'Our prayer is public and common; and when we pray, we pray not for one, but for the whole people' (*Dom. or.* 8). Cyprian seems to imply that this is the case *despite* the fact that Christians might be praying while alone (Hammering 2010: 32).

Gradually practices that were once the habits of ordinary believers would be more and more codified and elaborated in the growing monastic movement. And by the fourth century, some cathedrals will conduct services of daily prayer morning and evening. These cathedral offices had a more-or-less fixed psalmody and communal intercessory prayer, and seem to have been popular among the laity and truly public events (Bradshaw 1992: 188). In some accounts the cathedral office produced power through heightened ritual drama. On the other hand, the daily prayers of ordinary believers lacked either drama or high commitment. Certainly, there was no way to enforce prayer six or seven times a day. Generally, daily prayer lacked the drama of baptism, and the exclusivity of the Eucharist. It is obvious if someone is being baptized or receiving communion, but it is difficult to restrict prayer, per se, since it can be performed silently and without obvious gesture (MacMullen 2009: 85). And while we cannot know how many lay Christians prayed the full course of hours, we do find attempts to make prayer itself more ritually important by making it more restrictive.

One way of elevating the significance of prayer was to restrict who could pray the Lord's Prayer. As noted, Did. 8.3 calls for a recitation of the Lord's Prayer three times daily. This teaching follows immediately the catechetical 'Two Ways' material in Chapters 1-6, and the ritual of baptism in Chapter 7, implying that the use of the Lord's Prayer was a post-baptismal privilege. Tertullian, whose treatise on prayer is the earliest surviving exposition of the Lord's Prayer, writes for the edification of the newly-baptized, but also 'to call the unorthodox back to the truth of pure Christian teaching' (Hammerling 2010: 31). Cyprian goes even further in restricting the use of the Lord's Prayer to the baptized who are in full communion with the Church, for 'He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother' (*Unit. eccl.* 6; ANF 5: 423). Cyprian's argument is logical; Christians could not pray together with pagans for obvious theological reasons, and this set them apart from much of Graeco-Roman culture. But the effect of such communal boundaries is to enhance the significance of officially sanctioned, distinctively Christian prayer.

A second way prayer began to shape the communal boundary is through its association with the kiss of peace. Roman and Greek literature and art provides examples of individuals blowing kisses to the gods and kissing idols, but the association of the kiss with prayer would seem to be a Christian innovation (Phillips 1996: 5–6, 16–21). In later centuries, the kiss was associated with the Eucharistic liturgy in the Latin churches, but in the first three centuries Christians regularly shared a kiss in all their communal gatherings for prayer. Tertullian specifically describes the kiss as the 'seal of prayer', and he infers that the sharing of the peace ordinarily would even take place at home (*Or*. 18). He also indicates that Christians would regularly pray and share the peace with fellow Christians who were visiting their house (*Or*. 26). The kiss, however, is restricted within the community of the baptized. Catechumens are not allowed to share the kiss even among themselves because their kiss was 'not yet holy' (*Trad. ap*. 18.3).

In the first three centuries the kiss was performed mouth to mouth, and the separation of believers and non-believers may have been thought to avoid spiritual contamination. But as Michael Penn has shown, in Greek and Roman cultures, the kiss was also a marker of family boundaries. Indeed, in the first two centuries, the church understood itself to be a family of brothers and sisters, and the family was a place where a kiss could be shared promiscuously among the sexes (2005: 28, 37; and also Phillips 1996: 24–5). This new construction of family imbued the kiss with countercultural meaning, but also left it open to spontaneous innovation that might be problematic. In the late second century, Athenagoras comments that some over-eager brothers and sisters might kiss 'a second time' because they found the kiss erotically pleasurable (*Leg*. 39). Consequently, at some point in the late third century, the kiss was no longer allowed between men and women (*Trad. ap*. 18.4), even as it continued to be associated with prayer. This, again, illustrates the pull of the formal/communal quadrant of dimensional typology in the regulation of ritual practice.

Conclusion

What, finally, can one conclude about the daily patterns and communal boundaries of early Christian daily prayer? Clearly, in the formative early centuries there was not one simple model for prayer even if we consider only the Jewish sources. Something as basic as cultural divisions of the workday can give rise to division of the life of ceaseless prayer into *terce, sext*, and *none*. The natural (what else can one call it?) attraction of human beings to the sun and moon can lead to morning and evening prayer. Conventional signs of respect such as standing at attention or bowing one's face apply to respect for the divine by way of analogy. Very little in the Christian practice of prayer can be traced to peculiarly Christian origin. But once a practice entered into the dialectic of popular religion and institutional religion, it became more codified and theologized. The written witnesses to quotidian practices show how institutionalization moved ritual from more spontaneous engagement to more formal

ritual practice, from the left to the right in the theoretical typology of Figure 33.1. Practices that are not inherently theological gave rise to theological explanations which in turn shaped performance, and so on, in a dynamic, cyclical process. But liturgical prayer was rarely if ever a simple repetition of a biblical precedent. Rather, it was a discovery. It was praying three times a day because that is simply what one did, and then stumbling upon Daniel 6:10 and recognizing the origin and the reason for the practice.

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CHAPTER 34

RITUAL AND EARLY CHRISTIAN ART

ROBIN M. JENSEN

Introduction

Many modern viewers consider the earliest extant examples of Christian visual art as essentially symbolic or didactic. Although it is true that most of the images that decorated the walls of tombs, lamps, or the walls of early churches were drawn from biblical stories and thus appropriately regarded as illuminations of textual narratives, scholars have paid less attention to the ways that much of the extant iconography also depicted aspects of early Christian rites and in some cases may even have served a ceremonial function. At the very least, the presence of pictorial iconography in spaces that hosted traditional ritual events would have informed participants' experiences by acting as a backdrop to those events. While representations of popular scripture passages were unlikely to be the focus of devotional prayer or veneration in the way that later portraits of saints, Jesus, or the Virgin Mary came to be, it is incorrect to see them as playing merely didactic or catechetical roles, as if they were simply visual aids to written texts. Rather, the limited repertoire of the images, their spatial context and compositional arrangement, as well as stylistic aspects of their fabrication, all suggest that early Christian artifacts played a role in shaping and reflecting on certain religious practices. Because of this, it is crucial that art historians who study these objects recognize the 'religiousness' of early Christian art and attend to a 'religious way of viewing images' that incorporates a 'ritual gaze' which acknowledges the interaction of witness, action, and image instead of seeing such art as merely representational or basically illustrative (Elsner 2007: 29–30, 48).

Studies of early Christian iconography can disclose features of ritual practices that might not be evident from a study of literary documents alone. Visual depictions of people apparently engaging in some rite sometimes provides a setting for the activity, just as it populates it with characters who have distinctive features, stature, garb, gestures, and postures. These iconographic details may amplify, confirm, or in some instances apparently

contradict the textual data. Still, many of these images are not obviously instructive, nor can they be explicitly correlated with particular sacred narratives. Furthermore, images of rituals were likely more interpretative than descriptive and, like documentary references to rituals, are apt to be idealized rather than realistic presentations. Discerning their subject matter requires as much attention to their setting or occasion, aspects of composition, and broader context as to their content. Moreover, as later practices demonstrate, viewing certain kinds of images could be a form of ritual behaviour as such. This raises the possibility that this also was the case in an earlier era. Thus, while iconography may depict various rites and thereby offer data about how they were enacted, their purpose, or possible meaning, they should be regarded more as broadly illuminative than explanatory. Yet, while recognizing that one cannot know exactly how images or their viewers interacted, particularly in ritual contexts, the undeniable reality of that interaction, and its inevitable sensory effects, warrant our attention.

For all these reasons, studies of early Christian rituals can be greatly enhanced by visual analysis of the physical environment in which they transpired. The physical design of ritual spaces and the ways they were embellished with paintings, relief carvings, floor and wall mosaics, and other media were not components of neutral or indiscriminate decorative schemes, but (intentionally or not) assisted, enhanced, and interpreted the rituals that were enacted within or near them. Spaces for ritual, like representations of such activities, are more than stages: they are actors in their own right, sometimes maintaining a performative presence even after the human players have left the room. Thus, students of ritual should seek out available depictions in visual art, but perhaps more crucially attend to the settings, implements, and iconography that surrounded and therefore affected both the performance and experience of the rite.

Rituals in Early Christian Funerary Art

Among the visual images that decorated early Christian tomb chambers and stone sarcophagi are depictions of individuals engaging in certain ritual activities. Some allude to a particular sacred story (e.g. the baptism of Christ) while others appear to depict rites apart from a specific narrative context (e.g. a figure at prayer or a group sharing some type of ritual meal). These images may even prompt or depict ritual actions that take place in their presence. Although the references are different, insofar as one portrays a particular event with recognizable characters while the other seems to depict an ongoing practice, such distinctions may be arbitrary, particularly in a sepulchral context. In general, certain narrative images may indicate aspects of the deceased's character or status and thereby expand the potential implication of the figure beyond textual illustration to personal identification, or from the literal to the referential or symbolic image. Moreover, the images selected for wall or coffin decoration could intentionally have

expressed beliefs about the care of the dead, the mourning of friends and family, and certain hopes or expectations for life beyond death.

The Praying Figure

One common motif among these funerary images is a frontally rendered and veiled figure with arms extended to indicate the act of prayer (Figure 34.1). The majority of surviving examples are female, male parallels are less abundant. Commonly denoted as orants (or *orans* figures), from the present participle of the Latin verb, *orare*, their praying posture was customary in the ancient world and thus adopted by Christians (cf. 1 Tim. 2:8). A veiled female affecting this posture and gesture was a popular pre-Christian personification of the virtue of piety (*pietas*) and, as such, frequently appeared on Roman coinage, often next to a sacrificial altar (Klauser 1959: 115–45). Her image in a funerary context arguably portrays the deceased as a pious individual but models the attitude that should be adopted by those who gaze upon it.

In clearly Christian contexts, this figure may likewise have personified *pietas*—especially when accompanied by a seated male reader who could have been meant to

FIGURE **34.1** Praying figure from the Catacomb of Callixtus, third century

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typify the cultivation of Christian *paideia* (Bisconti 2011: 82). The Good Shepherd often joined these two figures on Christian sarcophagi, perhaps to exemplify philanthropy (Figure 34.2). Together, the three figures: seated reader, praying figure, and shepherd, represented the deceased's intellectual and spiritual merits (wisdom, devotion, and charity) as well as virtuous activities.

Because the orant is especially common in Christian funerary contexts, art historians have suggested that it represents the male or female deceased's soul (*anima*) beseeching God for deliverance (Milburn 1988: 32–3; Jensen 2000: 35–7). Early Christian writers noted that the prayer posture imitated the appearance of Christ on the cross (Minucius Felix, *Oct*. 29.7–8; Tertullian, *Or*. 14). Yet, the surmise that the figure was meant to represent the soul appealing for divine salvation is more plausible for sepulchral contexts, particularly considering its frequent juxtaposition with depictions of endangered biblical heroes who likewise adopt the prayer posture as if calling upon God for rescue (e.g. Noah in the ark, the three Hebrew youths in their fiery furnace, Susanna spied upon by the elders, and Daniel in the lions' den). Some scholars have suggested that ancient Christian prayers for the dead invoked these characters thus making them appropriate subjects for tomb decoration.

Henri Leclercq initially speculated about the existence of a prototypical Jewish 'Prayer for the Recommendation of the Soul' and identified potential parallels in the eighth-century *Gelasian Sacramentary* (the *commendatio animae*) and a prayer from Pseudo-Cyprian that refers to Noah, Jonah, Enoch, Abraham, Lot, Rahab, Elisha, Elijah, Job, Moses, and Daniel (Leclercq, 1907: 187–9). Other historians accepted Leclercq's compelling thesis (Ferrua 1962: 7–69; Grabar 1968b: 88, Fig. 82; Dinkler 1979: 397–8; Finney 1994: 282–4), although the later dating of the extant prayers as well as the fact that they omit some of the most popular figures in the early artistic programmes makes it impossible to confirm.

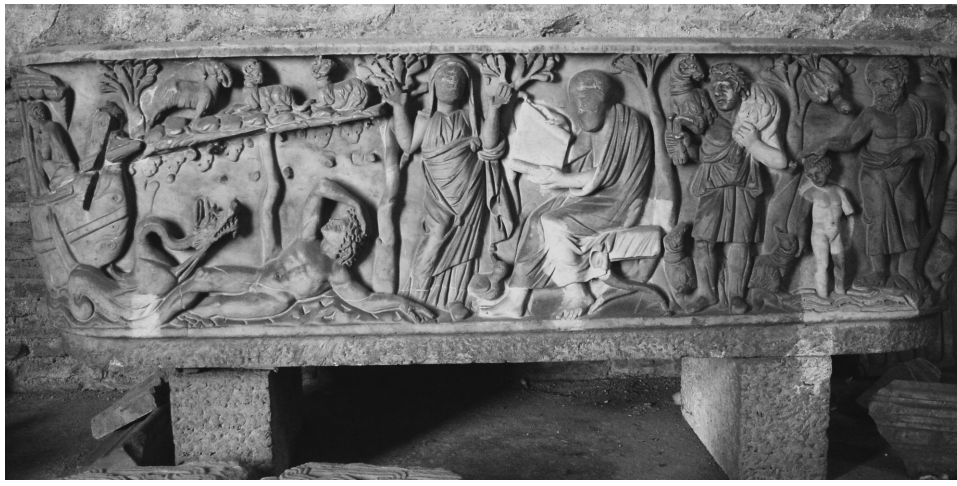

FIGURE **34.2** Christian sarcophagus from the Basilica of Santa Maria Antiqua, *c*.290

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Attributing the iconographic motifs in early Christian tombs to some type of ancient intercession for the dead is nevertheless logical. Those coming to pay their respects on the anniversaries of death, or other traditional occasions for visiting the graves of friends or family members, would be reminded of these Bible stories and be prompted to trust in God's promised salvation. Yet, it may be simply that all these orant figures more broadly signify the virtue of piety and the importance of engaging in prayer—whether or not specifically on behalf of the dead—in early Christian practice (Huskinson 1999: 190–213).

Some of sarcophagus orants' faces were left blank, as if patrons intended to customize them with portraits. In fact, many of those painted on tomb walls also appear to have been envisioned as likenesses of particular individuals. One of the best-known examples comes from the Catacomb of Priscilla (Dagens 1971: 119–29; Denzey 2008: 75–88). Often referred to as 'Donna Velata' (the veiled lady), this orant is garbed in a dark red dalmatic with two vertical bands and a while veil with dark stripes that reaches nearly to her waist (Figure 34.3). Vividly rendered, her hands reach up as if animated and she casts her eyes upwards and to her right as if in appeal to a heavenly being. Her relatively large size and central placement make her a commanding presence in this small chamber; she is the

FIGURE 34.3 Catacomb of Priscilla, chamber of so-called Donna Velata, late third century

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first image that catches the visitor's eye, perhaps meant to model the attitude they should affect as they entered her space.

Biblical characters that God delivered from death surround her: Isaac, Jonah, and the three Hebrew youths. The Good Shepherd stands over her in the centre of the cubiculum's vaulted ceiling. He either may be the focus of her prayer or simply a general reference to divine succour. The two groups of individuals shown to her left and right might provide some biographical information. Although scholars have sometimes identified the woman with the child on her lap on the right as the Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus (Beckwith 1970: 21; Stevenson 1978: 88), others have argued that they depict the deceased orant with her own baby. Balancing this, the group to her left has often been perceived as her husband with their two older children (Leclercq 1953: 3105; Ellison 2017: 101). Alternate construals of this group, however, have been suggested. Some historians proposed that the scene shows a venerable bishop consecrating a young virgin; the boy acts as deacon and bears the veil that she will don (Wilpert 1903: 203–9; Marucchi 1935: 179; du Bourguet 1971: 29; Stevenson 1978: 88).

Other scholars have argued that the image depicts a teaching scene, perhaps a bishop giving catechetical instruction to the young woman or a father teaching his daughter (du Bourguet 1966: 76; Grabar 1968b: 188; Denzey 2008: 84–5). Still others propose that it shows a bishop overseeing the presentation of the *flammeum* (nuptial veil) to a young bride while she reads her wedding contract in the presence of her betrothed (Dagens 1971: 119–29). The latter interpretation generally sees the whole composition as a depiction of stages of life (marriage, motherhood, and death). The consecratory or marriage scenarios are unlikely, not least because the supposed veil is actually very indistinct and so quite uncertain as an iconographical element. Moreover, surviving textual descriptions of such actual ceremonies bear little similarity to the depiction itself (Ellison 2017: 94–102). It seems more plausible to see the three groups as alluding to the woman's life as a wife and mother.

Priscilla's veiled orant has many parallels in other catacomb paintings. One example, found in the Catacomb of San Gennaro in Naples, shows a woman named Cerula who is described as at peace (*in pace*). Like Donna Velata, she is veiled and depicted as an orant; a decorated stola wraps her shoulders and her grey hair is carefully arranged in a row of curls. She, like the girl reading the scroll in the Donna Velata group, is also depicted as an educated woman. Above her head is a tau-rho figure flanked by an alpha and omega. To her right and left are books, identified by titles as the New Testament gospels. Her visage, as in the Priscilla catacomb, seems to portray a particular woman, possibly the individual buried in this cubiculum. Because she remains in perpetual prayer, her image prompts the faithful who enter to join her and, perhaps, to be attentive to the beloved scripture stories of God's reliable rescue.

The Meal

Both catacomb paintings and sarcophagus reliefs frequently show scenes of persons seated around a sigma-shaped table, sharing a meal of bread, wine, and fish (Figure 34.4).

FIGURE 34.4 Meal scene, from Catacomb of Callixtus, late third century

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In the past, scholars have interpreted these popular scenes as depicting various biblical narratives including the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves or Jesus and his apostles at the Last Supper (Grabar 1968a: 8–9). More recently, historians have identified them as representing some kind of actual ritual meal but disagree about the kind of repast the participants are sharing. Some claim they are meant to show the celestial banquet promised by Jesus at the Last Supper, when his followers would come from all directions to recline at the Lord's table (Lowrie 1969: 51–3). Others argue that it portrays an early Christian Eucharist or *agape* meal (Marucchi 1935: 291–2; Milburn 1988: 25; Snyder 2003b: 124–6). Both of these latter interpretations assume that early Christian meals were celebrated in house churches and looked more or less exactly like the scene as depicted: a small group of individuals seated around a semi-circular dining table in a domestic *triclinium*. An additional scene, which remains rather enigmatic, shows a man and woman on either side of a tripod table; the man holds his hand over a loaf on the table while the woman takes the prayer posture. The image captions often refer to all of these either as eucharistic banquet or the *fractio panis* (Grabar 1968b: 107, 112).

One of the most famous examples, found in the so-called Cappella Graeca (Greek Chapel) also in the Catacomb of Priscilla, clearly depicts seven women reclining at a table (Figure 34.5). Variously dated to some time in the third century, this particular painting shows one figure (on the far left) sitting at the front or side of the table rather than behind it. The presumption of some viewers is that this individual must be the presider or ritual celebrant. That she is female is then often cited as convincing archaeological evidence for women acting as hosts, clerics, or even bishops at early Christian ritual meals, either Eucharistic or funereal or a hybrid of both (Irvin 1980; Torjesen, 1995: 55; Snyder 2003a: 58–60; Denzey 200: 100). Furthermore, some historians have used this image of an all-female group to argue that at least some women would have held ritual meals separately from men, a practice not described in any surviving documents (Corley 1993: 76).

A more broadly contextualized interpretation that compares such images to non-Christian comparanda regards them as depicting traditional Graeco-Roman funerary

FIGURE 34.5 Banquet scene from Catacomb of Priscilla, third century, Cappella Graeca
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banquets rather than distinctly Christian Eucharistic or *agape* meals (Jensen 2015: 556–8). Almost identical scenes in non-Christian tomb contexts are evident in the hypogeum of the Aurelii in Rome and on the walls of the (pagan) mausoleum of M. Clodius Hermes within the complex of the Catacomb of San Sebastiano. These also show seven or nine people around a semi-circular table sharing bread and wine. Occasionally, they similarly portray only women participants, as on a mosaic of women at a convivial funeral banquet from Antioch, which adds the inscription '*memosyne aiochia*' ('memory banquet'). One convincing interpretation proposes that this mosaic likely depicted a group of women who belonged to a funerary association gathered for a memorial banquet (Kondoleon 2000: 121–2).

Another comparable instance was discovered in the hypogeum of the Roman matron, Vibia (Figure 34.6). Vibia was buried, along with her husband Vicentius, in a family tomb decorated with traditional pagan iconography. In addition to depictions of Hercules rescuing Alcestis, Pluto carrying off Vibia (in the guise of Proserpina), and Vicentius dining with the underworld judges, the rear lunette displays a fascinating image of the good angel (*angelus bonus*) guiding Vibia through a gate and into a meadow where a celestial banquet is underway. Six men recline at a *stibadium* in a kind of paradisiacal or garden setting; they are wearing wreaths and raise their glasses in a toast to Vibia. Apparently, she has passed their examination, for the legend above the men's heads indicates that she has been judged to be among the good ones (*bonorum iudicio iudicati*). Fish and other foods (bread or a cake) appear on the table and a servant brings in a platter with poultry. Two figures in the foreground appear to be playing a game of dice.

These non-Christian examples indicate that the Christian versions depict a ritual practice that was not uniquely Christian. Instead they seem to portray some kind of universally practised funerary meal (*refrigerium*) that was observed by Christians and non-Christians alike, although Christians may have adapted it to reflect a specifically Christian meaning, perhaps an allusion to the celestial banquet (see Gudme, Chapter 20 in this volume). Yet, the iconography in Vibia's tomb most likely also alluded to the deceased's anticipation of (or hope for) a picnic in Paradise, perhaps not all that different from its meaning in a Christian context. In either a Christian or pagan context,

FIGURE 34.6 Hypogeum of Vibia, fourth century

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the motif must have expressed a variety of meanings, among them the anticipation of a blessed afterlife. The art historian and archaeologist Katherine Dunbabin argued that no single identification suffices for any of these images, that the banquet scene may have been intentionally ambiguous—either a feast in heaven or in the tomb, in the present or in the future, celestial or terrestrial, funerary or otherwise (Dunbabin 2003: 190). To Christians, the ever-present fish could symbolize the presence of Christ in such meals, even if it appears in non-Christian contexts as well. Such ambiguity allows this particular image to have multiple resonances with various Christian rituals, including Eucharistic meals, which can themselves be understood as being figuratively anticipated in the stories of Jesus' feeding miracle, re-enactments of the Last Supper, and evocations of the promised banquet with Christ in heaven. The last signification is particularly appropriate for a funerary context in which family and friends might gather to share a memorial meal for a deceased loved one. In each instance, the pictured meal is a perpetual one; always present at the burial site, whether or not actual, living diners are present.

Baptism

Another scene commonly found in Christian catacomb painting and sarcophagus reliefs shows a large, bearded male placing his right hand on the head of a small, naked youth (see DeMaris, Chapter 22 in this volume). The elder's gesture is similar to that of an early Christian bishop, who through the imposition of his hand conveyed the gift of the Holy Spirit immediately after baptism. Water appears in most of these scenes, usually in the midst of a rocky landscape. Normally a dove appears overhead (Figure 34.7, cf. also Figure 34.2). The presence of the water, the officiant's gesture, and the nudity of the recipient all have prompted art historians to identify these as depictions of an early Christian baptism. Yet, the dove's inclusion and the indications of an outdoor setting,

FIGURE 34.7 Baptism scene

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have suggested more specifically that some be identified more precisely as representations of John the Baptist's baptism of Jesus (Jensen 2011: 26–9).

Certain aspects of the iconography contribute to the confusion. The relatively small size of the recipient argues against its being a depiction of John baptizing an adult Jesus (cf. Luke 3:23). Yet, examples that show the baptizer dressed in an animal skin, clearly indicate that he is John the Baptist. In others, the officiant wears a rustic, short one-shouldered tunic, or a *pallium* draped over a long tunic or—in some cases—over a bare chest. The baptizer's gesture is puzzling. As an episcopal imposition of hands it could indicate the reconciliation of penitents as well as the transmission of the Holy Spirit to a neophyte (De Bruyne 1943). Similarly, Jesus lays his hands on the infirm in most early depictions of his healing miracles.

The small stature and nudity of the initiate also require consideration. Literary evidence confirms that, by the third century at the latest, candidates were stripped of their clothing before they descended into the font, but children were not the regular recipients of the rite prior to the fifth or sixth century (Jensen 2000: 162–4; Ferguson 2009: 363–97). The childlike depictions of the baptized seem to suggest the neophyte's return to the innocence of a newborn, or a spiritual rather than an actual physical state. In addition, the scene shows a shallow, natural stream rather than a constructed baptistery. The water clearly is not deep enough to accommodate full bodily submersion and, in one instance, the baptizer holds a vessel for pouring. Finally, the iconography also indicates

that the imposition of hands is a central—perhaps the most important—gesture associated with the initiatory rite.

Thus, the inclusion of water, dove, and nude recipient may be crucial to identifying the scene as baptismal, even as it conflates the candidate with Christ, and the contemporary ritual administrator with the biblical baptizer. This identification of the ritual recipient with Jesus provides an obvious reason for displaying such iconography on the walls of a Christian tomb. Visually associating the deceased Christian's baptism with that of Jesus makes a decisive claim that this individual had been united to Christ in a baptism like a guarantee of future salvation.

In conclusion, these images neither precisely illustrate the scriptural account of Jesus' baptism nor literally depict some contemporary practice. Rather, they had at least a twofold purpose: to represent the gospel accounts of Jesus' baptism and to connect that foundational event with the continuing baptism of new Christians. In detail, this imagery incorporates a theological idea through visual symbolism—that in baptism the newly baptized person has been returned to the innocence of infancy, united to Christ by receiving a baptism like his (cf. Rom. 5:6), and has received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Depictions of Early Christian Rituals in Liturgical Spaces

Although early Christian rituals took place within available spaces that were initially adapted for such use, by the third century these spaces began to be purposely chosen, designed, and decorated to establish the context for sacred actions and support their effective functioning. The environment of ritual generally is a constituent part of how (and whether) its purpose was effectively conveyed to its participants. To the extent that a ritual is an enacted symbol, it is inevitably affected by the visual and spatial context that envelops it, which can inform, support, and express its intended function or conversely mislead, inhibit, or undermine it. Accordingly, the combination of word and action is joined by the visual symbol—a symbol that includes the basic shape and decorative scheme of a ritual's physical setting. Therefore, works of art not only enrich ritual spaces but also instrumentally impact the components of performance, levels of involvement, and overall experience of the participants. Ritual spaces thereby augment and affect the actions taking place within and around them, sometimes giving direction, purpose, or visually guided instruction to its subjects. Viewers and images interact directly and continually with the actions taking place in the surrounding space.

This may be usefully illustrated by two distinct instances of purpose-built ritual structures and noting how decorative schemes in two prominent examples interact with and even instantiate the ritual actions that occur within them.

Baptisteries

Chambers that were intentionally constructed to house the Christian ritual of initiation are among the earliest decorated ecclesial structures. In some places, baptisteries were attached directly to the main church building while in others they were free-standing structures. Although their shape and size vary, they are characterized by the inclusion of a pool that would accommodate the administration of water for the Christian initiation bath (Jensen 2000: 2013; Ferguson 2009: 819–52). Their specific ceremonial focus makes them ideal examples for investigating the ways visual art and rituals interact within purpose-built spaces (Wharton 1987). Examples of decorated baptisteries include the third-century baptistery found in the Christian building of Dura-Europos in Syria, the fourth-century baptistery of St John Lateran in Rome, the fifth-century baptistery of San Giovanni in Fonte, and the two fifth-century baptisteries of Ravenna, the Neonian (or Orthodox) baptistery and the Arian Baptistery.

The baptismal chamber in Dura-Europos is the earliest surviving example of a domestic space evidently renovated to house this Christian ritual of initiation and its décor serves as an excellent example of the link between ritual and visual art. Most likely originally a dining room, around 240–245 CE, the chamber was transformed into a baptistery by the addition of a rectangular font at one end (Figure 34.8). The room had two entrances, one opening on to a central courtyard and the other leading into an adjoining room that in turn connected to the hall, which apparently housed the full assembly for worship. The arched vault over the font and the baptistery walls were covered with

FIGURE **34.8** Dura-Europos Christian baptistery, *c.*240

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paintings, although only a portion (probably less than half) of the murals were still visible when the building was excavated in the 1930s.

Scholars have studied the iconography of the surviving murals with an eye to the ritual activity the room was designed to house and have offered a variety of interpretations of both the whole programme and individual elements. Exploring the links between visual art and liturgical texts, some have aimed at a ritual-centred analysis of the images, seeing them as both illuminating biblical texts that were closely aligned with the theological underpinnings of baptism and as referring to actual rites that would have taken place in the space (Serra 2006; Jensen 2012; Peppard 2016). In other words, these studies assume that the imagery served multiple purposes, insofar as it reflected on the meaning of the initiatory rite as well as giving some direction for its physical performance.

Two basic types of images comprise the iconographic programme in the Dura-Europos baptistery. The first is more symbolic and comprised of images of stars in the ceiling and the underside of the vault over the font and wheat, grapes, and pomegranates decorating the arch. The second, and more prominent set of images, was drawn from biblical narratives. Identifying the exact stories depicted in some instances has, however, been somewhat controversial.

The south wall of the chamber had two doors and two surviving images. A depiction of David slaying Goliath lies just to the left of the door from the central courtyard and immediately adjacent to a niche that could have contained oil for a pre-baptismal, messianic anointing that was both consecratory and possibly for the purpose of strengthening the recipient prior to a final battle with demonic powers; a pattern of ritual actions consistent with evidence from early Syrian liturgical texts (Serra 2006: 71–3; Peppard 2016: 50–60). Although the image is very fragmentary, the figures are clearly labeled (*DAOUID* and *GOLITHA*), leaving no doubt about their identity. The choice of this scene, rather than one depicting Samuel's anointing of David may seem incongruous, given its placement near the place designated for ritual chrismation (Weitzmann and Kessler 1990: 84–5). Nevertheless, some scholars have argued for the scene's suitability on the basis that it alludes to David as the conqueror of a tyrannical foe, and rather than a human enemy, in this instance sin, or Satan himself (Peppard 2016: 63–85; Korol and Stanke 2011: 1648–9). David's armour might suggest the analogy of the newly baptized with Christian soldiers, a theme that appears already in the New Testament epistles, for example, where the faithful are urged to put on the breastplate of righteousness, the sword of the Spirit, and the helmet of salvation (Eph. 6:1–17) or to be good soldiers, aiming to please their enlisting officer (2 Tim. 2:4). Such imagery continued in early Christian catechetical literature, when bishops admonished those preparing for baptism to be ready to fight evil like brave soldiers (e.g. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatech*. 10–11; John Chyrosostom, *Catech*. 2.1 and 12.30–2; summarized in Jensen 2012: 65–8).

The other door, a little to the east and closer to the font on the south wall leads into the room that connects to the assembly hall. Next to this is a more disputed image. It most likely shows either Christ with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:7–30), or the angel's annunciation to Mary at the site of a well as it is described in the Protevangelium of James (Prot. Jas. 11.1). While the story of the woman at the well with its allusions to the

provision of living water has more obvious resonance with the ritual of baptism (Jensen 2012: 193–6), a depiction of the Annunciation has been argued also to have baptismal significance insofar as it referred not only to the Incarnation, but also to one of the most important components of the baptismal ritual, the neophytes' reception of and illumination by the Holy Spirit (Serra 2006: 77–8; Peppard 2016: 155–201).

The eastern wall, opposite the font, had only fragmentary images of five pairs of feet, while the north wall had the most intact paintings. Here a depiction of Jesus healing the paralytic could have been a reminder of the ways that baptismal water was believed to be both cleansing and healing (Jensen 2012: 27–8; Peppard 2016: 93–9). Immediately adjacent to this, the image of Jesus and Peter walking on the water is an allusion to Peter's faith as he was willing to step out of the safety of the boat to make his way towards Christ (Peppard 2016: 87–93).

The image directly below these figures and nearest to the font is also controversial. One plausible interpretation is that it illustrates the parable from the Gospel of Matthew (25:1–13), which describes the five wise virgins arriving at the bridegroom's tent and carrying their still-lit lamps (Serra 2006: 70–1; Peppard 2016: 111–54). An older and still popular view is that it depicts the myrrh-bearing women arriving at the empty tomb on Easter morning (Grabar 1956; Kraeling 1967: 78; Jensen 2000: 162; Ferguson 2009: 442). Although only two women and traces of a third are evident in the remains of the fresco, there would have been room on the wall for more. They are of the same size, have identical features, and are dressed alike—they wear white garments and long veils—suggesting that they were intended to be figurative types rather than particular individuals. The surviving pairs of feet on the back (east) wall could have belonged to the wise virgin's foolish counterparts.

While viewing the scene as a reference to the Matthean parable arguably alludes to the idea that those undergoing baptism should understand themselves as symbolic brides joining their heavenly spouse in the wedding tent (Jensen 2012: 196–201), seeing it as a depiction of the women arriving at the empty tomb resonates with the idea of baptism as a symbolic death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3–5). Yet, because Paul's understanding of baptism as being united with Christ's death and resurrection is less prominent in second- and third-century Christian discussions of baptism's meaning or purpose than in the surviving literature from the fourth century onwards, it is reasonable to resist identification of the women as the myrrh-bearers coming to Christ's tomb. Nevertheless, the Dura-Europos font arguably conveys the Pauline interpretation. The rectangular shape of the font and its dimensions (approximately 1.6 m. long, 1 m. wide, and 1 m. deep) would have comfortably accommodated the immersion of an average-sized adult. The arched structure above the font is not simply a canopy but the exact image of an arcosolium placed above the tomb in many ancient hypogea, found in Syria as well in the Roman catacombs. Consequently, candidates may have sensed they were being both immersed and buried. Immediately behind them is the reminder of the reason for this ritually symbolized death—the fall of Adam and Eve. Just above the image of the first man and woman (with tree and serpent) is a reminder that baptism not only overcomes their sin, but also incorporates the faithful into the Good Shepherd's flock.

Scholars have attempted to reconstruct the baptismal rite at Dura-Europos in consideration of this iconography (Serra 2006; Peppard 2016). Moving east to west (or counterclockwise) around the room, beginning from the courtyard door, candidates first would receive an initial (Davidic) anointing, process towards the bridegroom's tent (or possibly the empty tomb), enter the font and emerge as forgiven of sin and as new members of the Good Shepherd's flock, and finally exit through door adjacent to the depiction of the annunciation to the Virgin Mary (or the Samaritan woman at the well)—a reminder of the Incarnation and an allusion to their own ritual reception of the Holy Spirit.

Iconography within Church Sanctuaries

Altar areas within early Christian churches were among the most sacred and usually the most segregated of ritual spaces. Even when altars were placed at the centre of the nave, they often were protected by low balustrades or placed on platforms that made them less accessible to non-clergy and indicated their separation from areas occupied by the laity (Mathews 1971). Over time, altars tended to move into the elevated apse areas of basilicas, which often were embellished with screens bearing panel paintings or sculptures or mosaics displaying figurative programmes that included Christ, the saints, and scenes from biblical narratives. These programmes thereby formed a backdrop for the sacred rites taking place around them. By guiding the worshippers' gaze towards and around themselves, they conveyed crucial information about what was transpiring in that distinct space and affecting their experience of the ritual. Yet, most apse programmes also presented an array of figures who redirected the participant's eye to realms beyond the sanctuary or the church building, linking the quotidian world with the heavenly one: the image of a starry night sky emblazoned by a gemmed cross, the golden and bejewelled walls of the New Jerusalem, a company of saints in an angel-filled heaven, or an ascended and regnant Christ.

The magnificent mosaics of Ravenna's basilica of San Vitale serve as a case study of an apse programme that reflects upon, replicates, and even participates in that building's particular Eucharistic liturgy. Built and furnished in mid-sixth century CE, San Vitale's double shell octagonal design provided a centralized space in which the congregation could stand relatively close to the sanctuary area, whether they were in the main nave or occupying the galleries. Nevertheless, the sanctuary itself was a projecting, raised area that ended in an apse that held the cathedra and benches for clergy. This deep sanctuary contains the majority of the surviving pictorial mosaics in the church, a programme that is extraordinarily complex but which can be understood as a unified composition that collectively and coherently presents the sources, meaning, and purpose of the Christian sacrificial meal.

In this instance, the clergy who occupied the sanctuary were the primary actors in the liturgical drama. The spectators—the laity—would have seen their movements in the context of the images that surrounded them on the walls, along with the liturgical instruments and furniture that were their primary props. The interaction of presiders,

images, and objects would have worked together to convey the meaning of the ceremonial action to both actors and viewers. For this reason, insofar as time and space allow, it is important to assess the decorative scheme of the sanctuary as a whole, rather than as parts, as it represents an intentionally interactive iconographic scheme.

The two most prominent mosaic panels in the setting are in the lunettes on the north and south walls immediately inside the presbytery's triumphal arch. The north lunette contains two distinct scenes from life of Abraham from the biblical book of Genesis (Figure 34.9). On the left, a depiction of the hospitality of Abraham at the oak of Mamre shows Abraham and Sarah serving a meal to their three angelic visitors, who occupy the centre of the space. Two of these visitors make the sign of blessing with their right hands and all three gesture towards three loaves of bread on the table, each incised with a X-shaped cross. It is at this visit that Abraham and Sarah are told that she will bear a son (Gen. 18). Sarah stands in a rustic booth, her finger to her chin in a gesture of amusement and looks directly out towards the viewer. To the right of the meal Abraham offers that son, Isaac, for sacrifice while the hand of God reaches out to stay the act (Gen. 22).

Abraham appears twice in this composition wearing distinctly dissimilar costumes: on the left he appears in the short rustic tunic of a farmer or shepherd; on the right—in the sacrifice scene—he wears a white tunic and pallium like those worn by the angels. He is also larger in stature, and so dominates the space while turning towards the *manus dei*. Isaac, kneeling on the altar and facing the viewer, wears a short, brown tunic almost exactly like Abraham's in the meal scene and which compositionally links father and son, just as Abraham's tunic and pallium seem to indicate his changing status or role.

The lunette directly across from this, on the south presbytery wall, shows Abel and Melchizedek (identified by name) on either side of an altar that is covered with an embroidered linen cloth and set with a two-handled chalice and two patens (Figure 34.10).

FIGURE **34.9** Hospitality of Abraham and Offering of Isaac, lunette mosaic, from San Vitale, Ravenna

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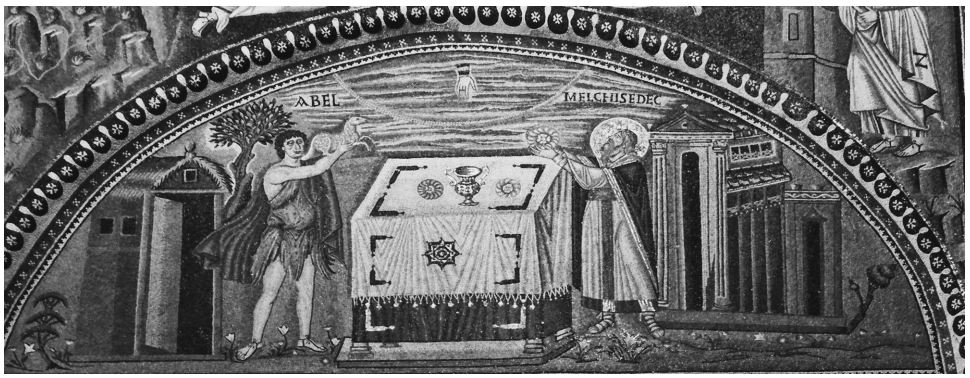

FIGURE 34.10 Abel and Melchizedek lunette mosaic from San Vitale, Ravenna

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Abel elevates his offering of a lamb; Melchizedek holds up a third paten. Their postures and gestures mirror one another, despite their differences in garb and the contrast of the buildings behind them. In the sky above, the right hand of God descends from the sky to acknowledge the offerings.

These two mosaics clearly relate to one another and the action that takes place in their proximity. They depict heavenly-approved sacrifices (Abraham's, Abel's, and Melchizedek's), which very likely were included in the prayer spoken over the actual altar situated on the sanctuary floor just below them (Von Simson 1987: 25, 37–9). According to ancient Christian teaching, Isaac and Melchizedek also prefigure Christ, who is both the true presider of the ritual and the one whose redemptive sacrifice is reenacted on that altar. The two-dimensional figures of Abel and Melchizedek raise their offerings in a gesture replicated by the actual celebrant as he elevates both paten and chalice during the Eucharistic prayer. The fact that the viewer sees the altar from the front (and the back of God's hand) suggests that the celebrant would stand behind the altar and face the congregation during this prayer. This placement is more clearly depicted in a related seventh-century mosaic in the neighbouring basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classe as well the sixth-century Riha and Stuma patens discovered in Syria.

In the vault's apex directly above the altar is a haloed lamb encircled by a wreath held aloft by four angels. Each angel stands upon a blue orb and is surrounded by an inhabited vine scroll. Four ornamental bands separate each angel's section of the dome and lead the viewer's eye up to the lamb. The lamb is the symbol of Christ as the Lamb of God whose sacrifice is re-enacted on the altar below. As the host was elevated, the eyes of the presiders and spectators would be drawn upwards to behold the lamb, the *Agnus Dei*, instantiated by the bread in the presider's raised hands.

A second triumphal arch demarks the portion of the apse that contains the bishop's throne. A lower band of geometrically patterned coloured marble rises from the floor to just below the three arched windows that illuminate the area. Directly above this band are two famous panels depicting the Emperor Justinian and his wife Theodora along

with their attendants. On the north wall, Justinian stands with a company of men, including Bishop Maximian (identified by name) who is positioned slightly in front of the others and carries a jewelled processional cross. Two dalmatic-garbed deacons accompany Maximian; one holds a gospel book and the other swings a censor. These objects, along with their vestments, provide useful historical data for liturgical scholars. Evidently, Justinian, regally crowned and haloed, is also part of a formal entrance procession (Mathews 1971: 146–7; Elsner 1995: 177–89). The emperor bears a large paten that appears to hold the pre-consecrated bread. Besides the clergy, his courtiers and soldiers accompany him (Figure 34.11).

To the south, directly across the sanctuary, the Empress Theodora, also crowned and haloed, appears, joined by her ladies and two male supporters (Figure 34.12). She holds a large, jewelled chalice and appears about to step through a curtained entrance into the church. The hem of her robe includes an image of the adoration of the magi, also an allusion to the presentation of gifts. The small fountain in front of her suggests that she is still outside, although another curtained entrance to the left implies a different doorway and the niche behind the Empress not only sets her off but seems to indicate that she occupies a different kind of space, possibly in the narthex of the church and at the foot of the stairs leading to the women's place in the gallery or—as one scholar has suggested—an otherworldly zone to indicate that she had died before the mosaic was completed (MacCormack 1981: 263).

FIGURE 34.11 Justinian mosaic San Vitale, Ravenna, mid-sixth century

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FIGURE 34.12 Theodora mosaic San Vitale, Ravenna

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These two panels offer some important insight into Ravenna's sixth-century liturgical practice. While there is no evidence that either Justinian or Theodora ever visited Ravenna, presumably had they been, they would have been accorded the honour of bearing the liturgical gifts to the altar. It may be that they, in fact, donated the actual vessels used in San Vitale and that these mosaics reflect those donations in an idealized sense (Deichmann 1976: 181; MacCormack 1981: 260–4; Deckers 2002: 38; Deliyannis 2010: 241–3). These mosaics' position within the sanctuary allow the imperial couple to be depicted not only as perpetual gift-bearers but also allow them to be physically—if only iconographically—present in a place where they did not normally stand to witness the sacred mysteries.

All the presbytery mosaics are dominated by the splendid apse mosaic that rises above them and actually must have been more visible to the assembled faithful than to the clergy, who, if we presume that they presided facing towards rather than away from the congregation, would have had their backs to it during the main parts of the Eucharistic liturgy. In the centre, a youthful and beardless Christ is enthroned on the orb of the world. Below, a rocky outcrop represents Eden with its four primordial rivers. Christ holds the seven-sealed scroll mentioned in the Book of Revelation in his left hand. Four figures stand on a flower-dotted landscape on either side. On the far right, the church's founding bishop, Ecclesius, presents Christ with a small model of the church as his gift. An archangel seems to place his left hand upon the bishop's shoulder,

although the model obscures the gesture. To the left, Christ extends a jewelled crown to St Vitalis with his right hand. Between them, another archangel, places his right hand on the saint's shoulder. The scene is set in a golden sky punctuated by coloured clouds. Here, as below, the motif of gift presentation is dominant. Ecclesius offers his gift of the church, Christ his presentation of the martyr's crown. This scene clearly resonates with the gifts of Justinian and Theodora as well as the gifts of Abraham, Abel, and Melchizedek (Von Simson 1987: 29–30). All of these gifts inform the ritual of the Eucharist that was enacted in 'real time' on the existing physical altar and by actual actors.

These mosaics were not only works of art, but in some sense also performers in the rituals that took place in front of them. Viewers—whether celebrants or observers—would have been aware of them, and consciously or subconsciously affected and guided by them. Furthermore, while artworks enriched the ritual experience, in a sense, their represented figures mimicked the actions of the 'real' human actors, giving them a permanent presence after the actual liturgy had ended and the sanctuary stood apparently empty. In this way, the mosaics in San Vitale's sanctuary, even more than the wall paintings in Dura-Europos' baptistery, are a bridge between present ceremonies and those of an immediate or distant past. The words spoken in the liturgy make that connection evident, but when the sanctuary is silent, the images on the walls constitute a continual offering. These images thus do far more than *illustrate* or enhance rites by their inclusion in the ritual environment. They effectively contribute to the ways presiders and recipients alike experience and understand the significance and purpose of what transpired in their presence, and at least in some places are themselves symbolic (and perpetual) participants.

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CHAPTER 35

HYMNS AND PSALMODY

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Introduction

This survey of the rise of Christian hymnody and its performance in ritual begins with a recognition of the importance of biblical exemplars and also an examination of the compositional techniques that can be seen in scriptural hymns of the Second Temple period (519 BCE–70 CE). The survey of the performance of these hymns and psalms in the biblical and early Christian periods highlights the paraenetic power of sung narrative hymns and the concerns for their appropriate use in ritual contexts. As well noted by Risto Uro (2016), a consideration of the role of ritual in the growth of Christianity during the early centuries is long overdue.

Inquiry into the role of embodied experiences in the generation of meaning and identity in Christian origins has steadily grown as interdisciplinary approaches have expanded to consider different ways that experience can be reconstructed from textual remains (Geertz 2010). While traditional philological and textual methods will surely persist in the study of Christian origins, it is worthwhile asking new questions about the social mechanisms that allowed these texts to function among the peoples who read and sang hymns and prayers in the early Christian period. How did the embodied effects of singing on the individuals of the past serve the aims of inculcating foundational knowledge and cultivate dispositions needed for worship? Integrative approaches that examine human cognition as embodied and multisensory can offer a potentially rich way to conceptualize how the ritual singing of hymns and psalms might have been experienced at the individual level. For participants, ritual experiences make the past accessible in the present moment. At the same time, they allow for the movement of traditions and teachings from region to region, between individuals and groups. The performative ritual practices of hymn-singing could be imagined as an especially effective way to inculcate teachings and cultivate dispositions among individuals.

Second Temple Hymns and Psalms

Scholars today readily acknowledge the importance of the Second Temple Jewish context for the understanding of early Christian ritual. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 and a renewed interest in Second Temple pseudepigraphic works have contributed to a reorientation within the scholarly study of Christian origins. This starting point stands in contrast to the classical conceptual framework for the study of early Christian ritual, namely, the Greek *polis* religion. The History of Religions School turned first and foremost to pagan religion and mystery cults, holding what is now seen as a problematic understanding that a uniform culture could be produced through strategic ritual practices (Stowers 2011). In its place are studies that temper what is known about ancient religion with what can be known about the lived experience of religion (Eidinow 2011), a perspective that takes as its starting point the embodied experiences of the individual.

Hymns and psalms composed during the Second Temple period often looked back to authoritative exemplars, such as the biblical psalms, as their models for recounting God's saving acts. These new compositions elected to rewrite foundational events such as creation, the Exodus, or some other majestic feat of YHWH's power in a detailed and vivid praise of God. Not only did these compositions succeed in inculcating foundational narratives for new generations after the exile but they also contributed to the vivid experiencing of God's presence in the ritual moment. Biblical hymnody emphasized God's sovereignty, which was recounted in his acts of creation and other foundational events in which God is victorious over his opponents. The extraordinary quality of the Exodus events also serves the aim of teaching in so far as the fantastic elements are more effectively impressed upon the memory (Feldt 2006).

The classic hymn that extols God's power in foundational narratives of origin is the Song of the Sea in Exodus 15:1–19, an account of God's deeds that bears little resemblance to the narrative in which it is embedded. The song depicts YHWH with multisensory images as a powerful warrior god (15:3) whose bodily form is singularly enormous and terrifying; his bodily attributes (strength, right hand, nostrils) are fearsome and his strength terrifying (e.g. a single blast of his nostrils moves the deep waters of the sea into two massive piles [Exod. 15:8]). The hymn also scripts the emotional response of the enemies in some detail (15:14–16):

> 14 The peoples heard, they trembled;
> pangs seized the inhabitants of Philistia.
> 15 Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed;
> trembling seized the leaders of Moab;
> all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away.
> 16 Terror and dread fell upon them;
> by the might of your arm, they became still as stone
> until your people, O Lord, passed by,
> until the people whom you acquired passed by. (Exod. 15:14–16)

A closing reference to the prophet Miriam leading women in a song in praise of YHWH's victory appears at the end of the Song of the Sea (Exod. 15:20–1), but no text is provided. In the Second Temple text known as 4Q365 from Qumran, a full version of the Song of Miriam appears at this place. This composition is textually dependent on the Song of the Sea and repeats key phrases and images but is clearly a new composition (Feldman 2013). The song of Moses in Exod. 15 and the Song of Miriam from 4Q365 indicate how songs that praise God reuse scriptural language and imagery in the writing of new hymns during the Second Temple period (Tervanotko 2016). Hymns that are composed during this time contain much dramatic and palpable vividness, often depicting God as an agent in scenes with kinaesthetic details that allow these hymns to be re-enacted in ritual settings. Philo of Alexandria (25 BCE–50 CE) writes that the early Jewish group known as the Therapeutae would ritually re-enact the foundational events connected to the Exodus by reconstituting the choral performance at the Red Sea in which the male choir was led by the prophet Moses and the female choir by the prophetess Miriam (*Contempl.* 83–9, esp. 87–8).

A further example of the pedagogical role that hymns and psalms had in Second Temple ritual is the prayer found in Nehemiah 9:1–37, a text that begins with the hymnic praise of God's deeds at creation and moves to a retelling of the foundational event of the Exodus (9:9–15). The setting for this psalm is the conclusion of the festival of Tabernacles, a feast which commemorates Israel's experience in the wilderness. The context thus highlights both Israel's rebellion and her intimate experience of God's presence. According to the LXX, the psalm is led by Ezra (cf. the Hebrew Masoretic Text, which reads the Levites). The narrative psalm is begun ceremonially by two different Levitical groups in the Temple area who start with the hymnic praise of God (9:5). Notably, the language for God used in this prayer is highly descriptive, attaching verbs of locomotion and physical action to YHWH (e.g. 'you divided the sea' [9:11]; 'you threw their pursuers into the depths, like a stone into mighty waters' [9:11]; 'you led them by day with a pillar of cloud, and by night with a pillar of fire' [9:12]). Like the Song of the Sea and the Song of Miriam from Qumran, the language used to describe God favours concrete physical details which create an image of the deity's physical and extended body as possessing presence, agency, and kinaesthetic power. This Second Temple psalm is firmly rooted in a larger narrative tradition of the fantastic events of the Exodus event, and thus functions pedagogically to inculcate this foundational narrative in the imaginations of those who have returned from exile.

The prayer in Nehemiah 9 illustrates well how ritual emotions can be understood to create the experience of simultaneity between the foundational narrative and the Second Temple ceremony that is being described. The second person address to the deity makes the rehearsal of history in this prayer lucid and personal, assisting in the actualization of God's presence in the ritual moment (9:6–15). In addition to the weighty presence of the deity, the prayer includes a considerable description of rebellious Israel (9:16–31), that wilderness generation who witnessed YHWH's mighty deeds first-hand. Almost as much narrative space is given to describing Israel, who is presented with many spatial details (bodily extension and locomotion) and whose dispositions of arrogance and

rebelliousness are expressed concretely with language about the body. The figure of rebellious Israel becomes a scripted emotional role, that is then inhabited by the assembled congregation, who in turn proceed to confess their sins (9:32–7). When the psalm shifts from the recounting of rebellious Israel in the wilderness to the present moment, the people in the Temple take on the posture of sinful Israel in the wilderness, thus effecting an experience of simultaneity between the narrative past in the ritual moment. The Second Temple congregation inhabits the role of rebellious Israel and takes on the ritually appropriate role of unworthiness. The actualization of the wilderness event demonstrates how narrative psalms contribute to the formation of dispositions that are suitable for ritual. In the instance of Nehemiah 9, the cultivation of self-diminishment is fitting for the ritual encounter of the divine presence in the covenant-remaking ceremony that follows in Nehemiah 10.

Prayers and hymns composed during the Second Temple period show an overwhelming preference to reuse stereotypical biblical language and imagery in retelling foundational events (Harkins 2010) wherein scenes of God's saving power are presented with memorable details alongside reports of the enemies' emotional responses to these feats, namely, their terror and dismay. These compositions not only express the majesty of God but they also include scripted affective responses to the event that the congregation is intended to imagine and embody. Thus, the dramatic quality of the retelling of the event becomes an occasion for inculcating stories that have a lasting significance for the community and simultaneously become the means for experiencing that event in the present. This vivid presentation not only paints an image of God that can be easily imagined by singers, it also inscribes the appropriate emotional responses to the event, namely, fear and terror, or awe and wonder, which serve as scripted dispositions for the individual to inhabit.

Similar to the examples of hymn writing in the Second Temple period, hymns in the New Testament use language, forms, and imagery from older scriptural exemplars. There are four hymns in Luke's infancy narrative: the 'Magnificat' (1:46–55), the 'Benedictus' (1:68–79), 'Gloria in Excelsis' (2:14), and the 'Nunc Dimittis' (2:29–32). Of these, the hymn voiced by Mary in Luke 1:46–55 is widely regarded as being modelled on the Song of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1–10) and, similar to other biblical hymns, praises God's prevailing power over enemies. The imagery in both commemorates God's victorious deeds and thus preserves an image that is central to the narrative understanding of God's sovereignty. The Magnificat reuses concrete bodily imagery for God which expresses his physical presence through the extension of his body and his kinaesthetic power: 'He has shown the power of *his arm*; he *has scattered* the proud in their conceit, He *pulls down* princes from their thrones, and *has exalted* the lowly' (Luke 2:51–2; emphasis added). While Second Temple prayers and practices have not customarily been seen as a model for later Christian experiences of worship, their compositional and rhetorical strategies may profitably shed light on early Christian attitudes and experiences of hymnody (Löhr 2014: 157).

Second Temple and early Christian hymns and psalms redeployed the rhetorical forms and language from foundational narratives in the writing of new prayers. These

compositional techniques of rewriting do more than simply cloak new compositions in the older authoritative garb of scripture, they provide scripted responses to these foundational events that the singer is intended to inhabit, thereby cultivating the desired dispositions for worship and encountering divine presence. These composed narrative hymns and psalms could be understood as both teaching foundational stories of God's power and encouraging the spiritual dispositions necessary for worship.

The Performance of Hymns and Psalms

Historical questions about the specific liturgical and ritual experiencing of hymns and psalms remain largely unanswerable for the biblical and earliest Christian periods. Hymns play a prominent role in the book of Revelation (12:10–12; 15:3–4; and seven antiphonal units 4:8–11; 5:9–14; 7:9–12; 11:15–18; 16:5–7; 19:1–4, 5–8), which appear to be modelled on both Jewish liturgical elements and also Roman imperial ceremonies. The New Testament mentions the singing of hymns and psalms at key moments such as at the conclusion of the Passover meal (Mark 14:26; Matt. 26:30) and acknowledges the activity as an important one in the earliest references to Christian worship (e.g. 1 Cor. 14:15, 26; Acts 2:46–7, 16:25; Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19; Aune 1992: 982).

While the New Testament gospels make oblique mention to the singing of hymns, readers are rarely told the texts that are sung or given a detailed account of the ritual occasions in which they were performed. While some have looked to the immediate Jewish context for these NT references, it is clear that Jewish liturgy and prayer practices were not standardized in the late Second Temple period, thus making it difficult to draw direct lines of influence from Jewish ritual forms to early Christian ones. Even so, the Second Temple practice of using biblical psalms as models for new hymns persisted in early Christianity, thus making this comparison of compositional techniques fitting.

In the early Church period, hymns that reuse scriptural motifs and language are composed in such a way as to focus Christian sympathies. Ephrem's first *Hymn against Julian* redeploys scriptural language associated with various foundational narratives that speak of idolatry (str. 16–19, the calf cult of Exod. 32 and 1 Kgs 12) and trials of the faithful by the foreign impious king (str. 18a, 20, the madness of the Babylonian king in Dan. 4; the fiery furnace of Dan. 3 respectively). In doing so, Ephrem not only inculcates those highly charged scriptural scenes of God's deliverance, he also inscribes the way that his congregation should respond to these present-day challenges. This embodiment of the scripted emotions in hymns can be understood as an imitative process, one in which the ritual participants are tacitly asked to mirror the experiences in the text or to actualize them in the liturgical moment. Consideration of embodied experiences of texts can offer a way of supplementing modern imaginations about how people reconstituted foundational experiences that allowed them access to a narrative in a mythic and heavily constructed past.

The Times for Hymn Singing

When we turn specifically to the topic of the early Christian performance of hymnody, we find communities often cultivated practices that fostered affective and pedagogical formation (Dunkle 2016: 13–52). The earliest external reference to Christian singing, from a letter by a Roman governor Pliny the Younger (61–*c*.113), suggests the broad outlines. Writing to Emperor Trajan around the year 112 to inquire about how best to handle the Christian community under his jurisdiction in Bithynia, Pliny comments on certain aspects of their worship. Christians, he writes, gather early in the morning to sing to 'Christ as if to a god [or to God]' (*Ep*. 10.96). He notes that the group sings 'back and forth between themselves' (*secum inuicem*), perhaps employing a practice of choral antiphony that also appears in Philo's description of the Therapeutae (*Contempl*. 10.89; Hengel 1987: 382–3). Thus, very early in its history, Christian singing was, at least in some parts of the empire, communal (that is, led not by single singer but by the congregation's call-and-response), Christocentric, and linked to particular moments of the day.

Later Christian sources show that the ritual performance of antiphony marking daily and annual moments remained a central feature of Christian worship. The Spanish pilgrim Egeria offers a valuable eye-witness report on the daily liturgical practices that she encountered in Jerusalem during her pilgrimage in the 380s. According to Egeria, monks and nuns, along with lay followers, gathered before cockcrow around the Church of the Resurrection to sings hymns and psalms responsively (*It. Eg*. 2.24.1). The later hours of the day, including the sixth, the ninth, and evening vespers (the moment of the candle-lighting), were accompanied by similar performance. Egeria likewise refers to the hymnody composed specifically for Sunday and the major dominical feasts. Thus, her account underscores the continuous practice of marking preeminent moments of the day and year through antiphonal use of song (McKinnon 1987: 116–17).

While Pliny and Egeria outline formal features of the performance of Christian hymnody, other sources reflect on the benefits of hymns in ritual settings. Drawing on both classical and biblical traditions that promoted communal song, authors cite music's capacity to incite the affections of the congregation. Eusebius reports that Dionysius, Pope of Alexandria (248–265), praised Bishop Nepos' song-writing project: 'I love Nepos for his faith and toil and his work in the Scriptures and for his extensive psalmody, by which until this day many of the brothers have been cheered' (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl*. 7.24). These authors, especially in reflections on the Psalms, refer often to the links between hymn singing and the transformation of the affect.

Concerns about Hymn Singing

Many of the surviving references to hymnody come from authors critiquing the seductive allure of pagan and heretical verses (Dunkle 2016: 24–7). Explicit concerns about the composition of hymns and their public performance may account for the tendency

in the early Christian period to rewrite scriptural examples. Some of these concerns are expressly related to the paraenetic power of song and music (Plato, *Resp*. 3 [398b–403c]; Aristotle, *Pol*. 8.5–6; Iamblichus, *VP*, 25.110–11).

Some early Christian authors link pagan songs to settings of inebriation, debauchery, and even idolatrous worship. Other ecclesial sources and church orders suggest that the text of popular songs were often pagan and idolatrous. The *Didascalia* (early third century) exhorts those who look for songs to avoid those of the heathen and to turn to the psalter: 'And if you yearn for songs, you have the Psalms of David' (*Did. apost*. 9.5). The injunction against outside hymns implicitly opposes the influence of lyrics to exclusively scriptural worship. Indeed, singing a non-biblical hymn in worship was linked to uttering falsehoods. Reference to the threat of errors in the text of non-biblical hymns relates to an additional concern that appears in the early sources, which suggest that the church's prioritization of the Psalms by the fourth century could indicate an enduring commitment to the Old Testament against Marcionite tendencies. This may account for the dearth of Christian hymnography during the first three centuries (Fischer 1982: 17).

Rivalry among hymnists can also be seen in Athanasius' polemic against Arius. Athanasius (*c*.296–373) twice includes substantial excerpts from Arius's *Thalia* or 'Wedding Song', which is purported to contain the central tenets of Arian Christology (*C. Ar*. 1.5 and *Syn*. 1.15.2–3). Athanasius attacks both the content and the form of Arius's 'drinking song'. On the one hand, Athanasius claims, the *Thalia* contains errors by speaking of the Son's nature as created and thereby violating the scriptural record. On the other hand, the poem's verse is 'effeminate', clunky, and inelegant; the choice of metre reflects the silliness of the ideas it communicates. For Athanasius, the corruption of Arian theology corresponds to the debased poetics of the songs Arius employs; Athanasius thereby aims to inspire a certain repugnance for both the song and the theology of his opponent.

While music's ability to move the soul and to impress the memory led to concerns over this ritual activity, it also contributed to the role that hymns played in the inculcation of foundational stories. In addition to this pedagogical aim, early hymns and psalms sought to cultivate a spiritual disposition for worship within the individual Christian. Hymns and psalms in the fourth century would come to have a prominent role in Christian liturgical life, leading to controversies and debates concerning their form and the orthodoxy of their content. In a famous passage, Basil indicates the essential ecclesiological role of the use of distinctive Psalms in liturgy: common chant promoted a shared identity that marked the church's worship from their rivals in the empire:

> As to the charge regarding psalmody … the customs now prevalent are in accord and harmony with those of all the Churches of God. Among us the people come early after nightfall to the house of prayer, and in labor and affliction and continual tears confess to God. Finally, rising up from their prayers, they begin the chanting of psalms. And now divided into two parts, they chant antiphonally, becoming masters of the text of the Scriptural passages, and at the same time directing their attention and the recollectedness of their hearts. (*Ep*. 207; Way 1955: 83–4)

Basil sees the antiphonal chanting of the psalms as essential to the Christian life by both learning the foundational narratives of Scripture ('becoming masters of the text') and contemplating divine realities. Thus, Basil highlights both the pedagogical and psychagogical aims of the ritual experience of hymnody and psalmody in the Christian life.

Pray without Ceasing

Early Christians would have been familiar with the scriptural assumption that the constant singing of hymns took place in the heavenly realm. Hymns were performed primarily by celestial beings and imitated by human worshippers. This understanding is found throughout the Scriptures and is exemplified in texts like Ps. 19:1–6 (LXX Ps. 18:1–6), which speaks of the constancy of celestial praise of God the creator (vv. 1–2). The Book of Job similarly synchronizes the order and regularity of the celestial orbits with the eternal sung praise of God by the angels (Job 38:7). Glimpses of the angelic praise of God are seen in classic texts like Isaiah's vision in the Jerusalem Temple in which he sees the fiery seraphim and hears their praise of God: 'holy, holy, holy' (Isa. 6:3), words that later come to play a significant role in Christian liturgy. Scriptural scenes such as Isaiah's vision come to provide key elements of the Christian understanding of the eternal heavenly liturgy (Rev. 4:8) that human worshippers strive to imitate and hope to participate in. The participation of humans in the celestial praise of God is suggested by passages such as Ps. 40:4 (LXX Ps. 39:4) in which the hymns are said to have been placed directly on the lips of the psalmist by God himself.

Human praise of God's deeds and meditation on divine teaching should have a constancy that is not unlike the praise of God in the heavens. The psalter opens with the injunction to delight in the teachings of the Lord and to meditate on his Law, day and night, with the entirety of the Law understood to be encapsulated in the five books of the psalter itself. Psalm 119 is an extended meditation on the constant rumination on the law of God. In it, the psalmist expresses his devotion to the commandments of the LORD and recounts how he ponders the teachings of God day and night (e.g. 119:55, 97). The human-sung praise of God is modelled on and stands in continuity with the celestial practice of continually extolling God's sovereignty and power as creator. By the fourth century, all 150 psalms were incorporated into a set schedule of continual prayer throughout the day and night (McKinnon 1999: 49), a liturgical practice that could be understood to actualize this ideal constancy of the sung praise of God on Earth. The psalter came to dominate Christian worship as it began to take on a rather fixed form in a process that has been called a 'later fourth-century psalmodic movement' (McKinnon 1994).

Indeed, the oldest-surviving Christian 'hymn book' of any type is a fourth-century collection of Psalms, appended to Athanasius's famous letter to Marcellinus on psalmody. In the letter, Athanasius teaches ascetics to view Psalm singing as part of a therapy of the affections, with particular Psalms appropriate to various states of the

soul (*Ep. Marcell.* 15–17). Moreover, at the conclusion of the letter Athanasius emphasizes that the power of the Psalms comes not merely from the text, but also, and especially, from the music. Psalmody, then, was song that could promote a common faith and encourage fervour without the risk of dangerous innovations infecting the lyrics (McKinnon 1987: 51–2).

Some evidence suggests that the preference for the psalter and against new hymns contributed to a certain aversion to the use of original compositions in church worship. At the Synod of Antioch (269), Paul of Samosata is condemned for his suppression of 'psalms to Jesus Christ our Lord', which may imply that he introduced alternative hymns, and for his introduction of a women's chorus singing an 'Easter hymn' (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.30.10). Canon 59 from a Council at Laodicea, dated to the second half of the fourth century, forbids the use of 'individual psalms', which are linked to non-canonical literature in general. The authors of the canon seem to contrast the genuine biblical Psalms with private compositions that had later proliferated. Indeed, some have suggested that the canon of Laodicea contains an implicit comment on the inherently heretical nature of all hymnodic innovations (Hengel 1987: 370).

At the same time, in the late fourth century, some authors explore the specifically affective and pedagogical role that non-scriptural hymns play in Christian formation. Thus, in Book 9 of his *Confessions*, Augustine relates the development of Western hymnody to the Milanese crisis of 386, when the Arian (Homoian) forces of Empress Justina demanded access to the *Basilica Portiana*, which was blockaded by Christians following their bishop, Ambrose. Augustine claims that the stand-off marked the 'institution' of the practice of communal singing borrowed from the practice of the 'eastern regions' (*Conf.* 9.7.15). Designed to 'stave off boredom', the singing played a central role in strengthening the congregation's resolve. Indeed, Augustine's most personal remarks on hymnody appear in his experience of Ambrose's hymns. He reports that the hymns he sang in Milan after his baptism by Ambrose impressed his intellect and incited his desire:

> How copiously I wept at your hymns and canticles, how intensely was I moved by the lovely harmonies of your singing Church! Those voices flooded my ears, and the truth was distilled into my heart until it overflowed in loving devotion; my tears ran down and I was the better for them. (*Conf.* 9.6.14; trans. Boulding 1997: 220)

Although occasionally wary of music's capacity to seduce the soul, Augustine recognizes hymns' capacity to teach and to inculcate ritual dispositions (Dunkle 2016: 44–9).

Likewise, in Antioch and as bishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom promoted hymnody as a way of fostering communal and Nicene worship; singing together elides social differences and creates an 'equality of speech' (*Stud. praes.* 2). Elsewhere he speaks about the deleterious effects of unorthodox hymns and psalms, which actively work to 'soften' the mind, while 'spiritual psalms', in contrast, were recognized as having the capacity to purify the mind and to allow for the descent of the Holy Spirit in the hymnist

(*Exp. Ps.* 41.1). His work shows the pastor's concern for the hymn's effect on orthodoxy and divine union (McKinnon 1987: 75).

The Ritual Experience of Hymns and Psalms

While hymns thus reflect pastoral concerns emerging in the late fourth century, anonymous liturgical hymns from the period exhibit a further feature: sung hymns appeal to the affections to promote a common experience of the natural order. The preeminent example is the *Phos Hilaron*, which Basil of Caesarea cites as 'old' even in his time (*Spir.* 29.73). The brief hymn, sung on the occasion of the lighting of lamps at evening, offers praise to Christ the true light, the eternal Son of the heavenly Father in union with the Holy Spirit. Given the connection with the lamp lighting, the *Phos Hilaron* is an early example of hymns that call attention to the transcendent resonance of a shared common experience, in particular at a fixed hour, a link found also in pagan material (McKinnon 1994: 510). In the West, parallel developments appear in the spread of the *Exsultet*, for Easter, and the *Te Deum*. Although long attributed to Ambrose, these compositions witness rather to the anonymous diffusion of popular songs to celebrate the faith in biblical language and a range of metrical forms. By the end of the fourth century, Christians had developed a multi-textured understanding of the role that psalmody, literary hymnody, and popular songs played in the formation of the church. Singing particular songs, especially when they were tied to fixed liturgical moments, promoted a common experience that would set Christians apart from heretics and pagans.

The Actualization of Hymns in Ritual: The Example of Ambrose of Milan

In this brief overview, two hymns by Ambrose of Milan must suffice to show the role of hymns in actualizing a common scriptural narrative in the sensitivities of a particular Christian community: 'On the Third Hour' ('Iam Surgit Hora Tertia') and 'Hear O Who Rule Israel' ('Intende Qui Regis Israel'). Composing hymns, in part, to respond to doctrinal rivals, Ambrose employs sophisticated hymnodic techniques to unify his pro-Nicene congregation in a common worship that renders preeminent and foundational scriptural moments simultaneous to their performance by a late-fourth-century congregation.

In his hymn for the third hour of the day Ambrose uses specific hymnodic and poetic techniques to 'bring to life' a biblical understanding of the moment when Christ was crucified. By conflating various events linked to the third hour, including the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–13), the commendation of Mary to

the Beloved Apostle (John 19:25–7), and the forgiveness of the good thief (Luke 23:43), the hymn renders present a series of biblical events with particular resonance for a congregation of neophytes whose ecclesial identity would be reinforced by singing of the forgiveness they share through the action of the Spirit (Dunkle 2016: 106–10).

Ambrose's hymns for dominical feasts (Christmas, Epiphany, and Easter) show a particular attention to 'rewriting' the Psalms and major scriptural events. In his hymn for Christmas, for instance, the first stanza follows almost verbatim the opening of Psalm 80 ('Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel!'). In the fifth stanza Ambrose reworks Psalm 19's reference to the 'bridegroom' coming forth from his chamber to apply it to Christ the Word proceeding from Mary's womb. The effect is to transform the way the congregation would engage with the psalter itself; Milanese Christians would find Psalms 80 and 19 to be not simply the prayer of Israel to the Lord in a foundational act of supplication, but also the invocation of Christ by their own embattled pro-Nicene community. The hymnodic reappropriation allows the Milanese community to adapt the festive verse for a new Christian celebration of the coming of the Lord in the flesh through the Virgin Mary.

Likewise, in his hymn for Epiphany, 'Illuminans Altissimus', Ambrose conflates the foundational episodes of Christ's 'appearing' by reference to assorted Old Testament and New Testament events (trans. Dunkle 2016: 225–6). Describing the waters of Jesus' baptism, he cites the Jordan flowing backwards (Ps. 114:3, 5), Jesus as the bright (morning) star in the heavens (Rev. 22:16), and the waters that were changed into wine at Cana (John 2). The hymn's second half (lines 21–32) describes the feeding of the multitudes in John 6:1–15, giving special attention to the plentitude of the fragments from the account (vv. 12–13). The emotional response of the congregation is scripted as they sing of the water being 'shocked' (*stupent*) to become wine (line 19), and later as they themselves 'marvel' (*mirabitur*) at the overflow of fragments of bread (line 27). Ambrose's retelling of these events adds concrete bodily details that assist the singer to visualize clearly what it would have been like to partake of that first feeding miracle during the time of Christ: 'the food increased in their mouths between the chewers' teeth' (lines 23–4). The masticating image fits the present sacramental moment and allows the Christian to experience simultaneity with the foundational event. The hymn's closing image uses the abundant fragments that then overflow and pour through the fingers of the hands that collect them ('The abundant bread is streaming among the hands of those who break it, the untouched fragments, which were not broken, wind their way among the men' [lines 29–32]). This aqueous image of Eucharistic portions brings the hymnist back to the cosmic waters of baptism (lines 5–8) and the liquid in the jars at the wedding at Cana (lines 13–16); the scriptural scenes of sacramental transformation that begin the hymn. The appropriate ritual dispositions for the feast of Epiphany, namely, awe and wonder, are inscribed in the hymn.

Ambrose's congregational hymns also inspired compositions that mimic the effects of actualization and scriptural rewriting. We find this especially in the work of the Spanish poet Prudentius (348–*c*.413), who composed a series of poems for the hours of the day, the *Cathemerinon*, that expand on many of the actualizing features of his Ambrosian

model. Most scholars maintain that Prudentius' poems were never intended for liturgical use but rather for private, probably sung, performance (Palmer 1989: 67), and stylistic features, including the insertion of the poet's own voice, reinforce the hymns' literary aims (Cunningham 1966: 56–66). Yet Prudentius also adopts actualizing techniques from Ambrose that show Christian hymnody's penchant for a lexicon that encourages an audience to place itself in the narrative, especially by means of indexicals ('Here!'; 'Now') and the narrative rewriting and expansion of scriptural models. The literary reception of sung hymns tends to emphasize precisely those features of singing that would have helped the congregation enter into the feast and the scriptural text celebrated ritually.

Thus, performative elements and the ritual experiencing of traditions can be examined through emotions and other ways in which we understand embodied cognition to work. Hymnody and psalmody both sought to inculcate teachings and doctrines and also aimed to cultivate the spiritual disposition of its hearers—both are experiences that sought to form the Christian interior self. This experience of prayer phenomenon resembles the ways in which Derek Krueger's research has shown the work that Byzantine rituals and prayers do to shape the Christian interior life (Krueger 2014).

The Cultivation of Ritual Dispositions within Individual Christian Believers

Hymns and psalms undoubtedly played a significant role in the formation of a common ecclesial liturgy and a move towards a common culture; but this more comprehensive process could only take place through the cultivation of dispositions within individual Christians. This greater attention to the experiences of embodied cognition and emotional processes that take place within the individual raises important questions of how the self emerges, is constructed, and transformed. The consideration of how religion is experienced at an individual level has been an especially fruitful area to explore, especially so in the last ten years. The vividness and concreteness of hymns and psalms allow for the possibility of an especially personal and emotional response to the hymn. Cognitive science of religion can help us to understand how embodied practices of reading and visualization can generate experiences that express the immediacy of first-hand perception (see Klocová and Geertz, Chapter 5 in this volume).

The consideration of the embodied cognitive processes involved in hymn singing can illuminate why compositional techniques favoured the reuse of older narratives, established literary elements, imagery, vocabulary, and scenarios. Both Second Temple and early Christian hymns and psalms look to scriptural models for their new compositions. The paraenetic power of the sung psalms propelled the pedagogical and psychagogic experiences of the hearers and singers of these texts. How a text is told (e.g. its literary style, its first-person voice, its concreteness, its references to the body and narrative pace, the way it reuses language and imagery from well-known, highly-charged foundational narratives), can exert considerable impact on a reader's and hearer's imagination,

resulting in a deeper inculcation of the teaching that is being imparted. One consideration for the discussion of how hymns and psalms were ritually experienced is the way that staging and the ritual performance of the text aim to achieve a multisensory effect (Chaniotis 2011; Lieber 2015), and to prescribe scripted roles for the individual to inhabit (Krueger 2014).

When texts are written in imitation of older forms and employ a highly stylized manner through alliteration, assonance, and other literary devices, or written in a deliberate structured format with parallelism or with a refrain, the speed of reading is altered and slowed down, creating the effect that some literary theorists refer to as defamiliarization (Miall and Kuiken 1994). For the Christian who is participating in some way in the singing of hymns or who hears the hymns being sung, the general unfamiliarity of the scriptural language or the pace of the language may allow time for the intensification of attention and for emotional responses to occur. The slowing down, repetition, and the deliberate phrasing and accentuation of certain words or phrases, along with the naturally associative processes of the emotions that are aroused during the act of singing itself, can allow the mind to generate a more vivid mental image of the text. The repetition that occurs when singing or chanting hymns and psalms can also contribute to a ruminative effect whereby the mind can mull over and continually return to key phrases or teachings contained in the hymns.

The power of hymns and psalms is associated with their performance as sung texts. Greater bodily engagement and visual imaging take place when a hymn is sung or heard and thus heightens ritual's 'sensory pageantry' (McCauley and Lawson 2002). While the remains of ancient worship spaces are today emptied of the congregations who prayed there, the architectural vastness in the design of the sacred space communicates how that site was a fitting context for the hymnic praise and contemplation of God's sovereignty. 'Sound and singing reinforce motor memory, as arms and legs move to the beat of practiced notes and words' (Connelly 2011: 313–46, here 314). These various aspects of the physical environment when singing a hymn in a ritual setting can contribute to a stronger emotional response within the listener (Kuzmičová 2016). Since individuals rarely had private copies of hymnals or psalters in the early Christian period, the hearing of hymn singing and also the performance of sung praise would have allowed for greater movement of the eyes, a scenario in which the physical space could serve to intensify the process of mental imaging, thus strengthening the individual's emotional response. These naturally associative aspects of emotion can also allow a hymnist to actualize the hymn by allowing him/her the opportunity to reconstruct memories of similar emotional experiences. It is this complicated embodied process by which we might imagine how actualization allows for the affective re-experiencing of foundational narratives with first-hand intensity and the generative process of updating that narrative in light of changing circumstances.

The activity of singing and the mental imaging that takes place could be understood as a generative process whereby a sensory representation is produced in a malleable way within the individual mind, a process that is guided by the scripted emotions and scenes in the narrative of the hymn or psalm. The resulting experiential frame could then be

updated or changed as a reader merges or blends details from other remembered traditions or his or her own personal experiences, thus allowing for a deeper intensification of the experience (Barsalou et al. 2005). Even allowing for the natural variation in sensory experiences that can be expected over any given population, there is the general recognition that embodied engagement of a text involves the sensory and motor faculties of the brain. This process of 'enactive reading' (Kuzmičová 2012) is a way of referring to the process by which texts can be experienced with the perceptions of sensorimotor movement. According to Kuzmičová, enactive reading generates perceptions of phenomenal presence and relies on literary cues of first-person voice, spatial descriptions, and bodily movement. It is in the remembering of these foundational narratives, or if you will, the mimetic process, that individual experiencing takes place. The learning and remembering process which is the desired aim of hymns and psalms is not a mechanical process of slavish imitation, but rather an imaginative experiencing of the past—one that is always different because of the intersubjective in-betweenness of the individual. This mimetic cognitive process of mirror neurons is also what paradoxically frees us from a determinism in the case of ritual because religious practices naturally give rise to individual experiences and do not predetermine a uniform response in any single group. It is here that one can allow for the possibility of spiritual or religious experiences to take place within the worshipper.

The re-use of scripturalizing language in the writing of new prayers in the Second Temple period intentionally draws on the emotional impact of foundational experiences that reside in a scripturalized narrative past and reconstitutes them in the present moment. The compositional techniques associated with the writing of new hymns allow for the performative staging and experiencing of key emotions that ultimately work to cultivate a long-lasting devotion and piety that far exceed the moments of the ceremony itself (Chaniotis 2011: 264–90). It should also be said that the magnification of God that occurs in the hymnic retelling of God's great deeds of salvation can naturally bring about the experience of self-diminishment in the ones who hear and sing these songs. It is in these ways that the sung praise of God can cultivate the appropriate dispositions for worship.

Conclusion

These observations from integrative understandings of the embodied cognitive processes that take place during reading can broaden and deepen our own understanding of how early Christian hymns may have been ritually experienced. Compositional techniques that imitate scripture or redeploy scriptural language and biblical forms can be understood to function purposefully in the generation of diverse expressions of religion during the Second Temple period. This interpretive process can be imagined as taking place when a hymn's dramatic portrayal of events arouses strong emotions within the individuals who read and hear it, thereby providing them access to a participatory

re-experiencing of foundational events of God's saving deeds in Israel's history or in the very act of creation. The facticity of these foundational events as they are described is a question that is quickly overshadowed by the experience of the vividness of the imagery, the concreteness with which action is described, and the ruminative and multisensory experience of performing these songs. These experiential aspects of hymns and psalmody offer a gateway for accessing foundational events in an embodied way, such that emotional engagement can take place in the mind of the singer and the hearer. Emotion allows foundational events to be re-experienced by different groups through time with first-hand intensity. In the process, vivid memories of myths of origins can be updated in their details to meet the needs of new circumstances while retaining their emotionally compelling contours. A hymn's dramatic language and imagery are thus important cues for how a singer should feel. These scripted emotional experiences can in turn contribute to larger social mechanisms for group formation because they are often tied to foundational events that a community deems worthy of remembering and crucial for identity-making. In this way, hymns and psalms that accentuate the sovereignty of God, emphasize the correctness of teaching, and contrast good and evil participate in larger social mechanisms that can intensify and reinforce identification with the group. The style and imagery in a text can cue performative emotions which in turn function to intensify these experiences among group members.

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CHAPTER 36

WEDDING RITUALS AND EPISCOPAL POWER

DAVID G. HUNTER

Introduction

Around the year 380 an anonymous author in the vicinity of Antioch composed a handbook of church rituals and regulations entitled *Apostolic Constitutions* (Metzger 1985: 54–60). Attributed to the first-century Roman presbyter-bishop Clement, Book II of the *Apostolic Constitutions* offered the following account of the status of bishops, whose role in leading early Christian rituals signalled their extraordinary power and honour:

> For if the divine oracle says concerning our parents according to the flesh, 'Honour your father and your mother so that it may go well with you' (Deut 5:16) . . . how much more should the Word exhort you to honour your spiritual parents, and to love them as your benefactors and ambassadors with God? They have regenerated you by water and filled you with the Holy Spirit, they have fed you with the word as with milk, they have nourished you with teaching, they have confirmed you by their admonitions, they have bestowed upon you the saving body and precious blood of Christ, they have freed you from your sins and enabled you to share in the holy and sacred Eucharist, they have admitted you to be partakers and fellow-heirs of the promise of God! Reverence them, and honor them with all kinds of honour, for they have received from God the power of life and death in judging sinners and condemning them to the death of eternal fire, as also in freeing the penitent from their sins and restoring them to a new life. (2.33.2–3; SC 320: 252–4; author's translation)

According to the pseudonymous compiler, the authority of bishops derived directly from their role as ritual agents: bishops were 'priests and Levites, who serve at the holy tabernacle, that is, the holy catholic church, who stand at the altar of the Lord your God, and offer to him spiritual and bloodless sacrifices'. Bishops should be regarded

by the laity as 'prophets, rulers, governors, and kings, the mediators between God and his faithful people, who receive and declare his word … the voice of God and witnesses of his will, who bear the sins of all, and intercede for all' (2.25.7; SC 320: 230; author's translation).

This portrait of the late antique bishop in the *Apostolic Constitutions* provides a helpful starting point for the discussion of early Christian ritual practice and episcopal power in this chapter. I will not discuss the rituals explicitly mentioned in the preceding quotations, baptism, Eucharist, and penance, since these are well known and examined elsewhere in this volume. My aim instead is to draw attention to a neglected dimension of the bishop's ritual activity: his role in the development of specifically Christian marriage rituals. This ritual activity may have occurred less frequently than the bishop's main duties of baptism, presiding at Eucharist, and bestowing penance, but I will argue here that it was no less significant in establishing the bishop's authority and extending that authority into the daily lives of the Christian laity.

It is well known that one of the major revolutions in the late Roman world was the emergence of the Christian bishop as a figure of significant secular and ecclesiastical power (Rapp 2005; Van Dam 2007). This chapter will demonstrate the manner in which late antique bishops gradually participated in the ritualization of Christian marriage. A key aspect of this ritual activity was its ability to transform mundane, earthly bodies into specially 'instituted' or 'consecrated' bodies. The gradual development of Christian marriage rituals provided new identities to the bodies involved and instituted men and women into new social roles. Though ostensibly focused on the Christian couple, the ritual activity of the Christian bishop was an innovation that placed the bishop himself squarely in the centre of attention. Traditional marriage rituals continued, but acquired new meanings along with their gradual 'Christianization'; formerly private and familial matters were taken over and redefined by the public figure of the bishop. Moreover, the emergence of specifically Christian marriage practices provided the bishop with opportunities to establish distinction and to foster hierarchy within the Christian community.

Theoretical Perspectives

Before proceeding to an examination of the textual and liturgical evidence for the new forms of ritual activity performed by bishops, I would like to present some theoretical perspectives on ritual activity that provide helpful heuristic tools for an examination of the historical evidence. The work of ritual theorist Catherine Bell (1990), much of which is informed by the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu (1977), offers useful insights into the function of ritual in establishing the identity and power of the clergy. In an essay entitled 'The Ritual Body and the Dynamics of Ritual Power', Bell has described the function of ritual activity in the formation of what she calls 'ritualized bodies', that is, persons who embody social distinctions:

> A ritualized body is a body aware of a privileged contrast with respect to other bodies, that is, a body invested with schemes the deployment of which can shift a variety of sociocultural situations into ones that the ritualized body can dominate in some way … ritual is the social construction of a body by which 'the person' is afforded a particular sense of identity vis-à-vis other groups in which power is also localized. This is the construction of an identity that simultaneously empowers the person, by indicating his or her individuality and the basis of it, and limits or constricts the person, by defining that individuality as circumscribed by others, that is, as located within particular tensions making up the economy of power. (1990: 304–5, 308–9)

Bell's notion of the 'ritual body' highlights the function of rituals in creating *difference* or *distinction*, that is, their role in the formation of social identity and hierarchy.

Bell's approach to ritual also points to the ritual authority of the Christian bishop, which was constituted by means of his ritual actions, that is, by those activities that drew distinctions and created new identities. In her essay, again drawing directly from Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Bell refers to this as 'ritual mastery', which she describes in the following terms:

> To possess this practical mastery is to possess the tools for ordering and reordering the world, for perceiving and not perceiving, for evaluating, for unifying, and for differentiating—not as rules to follow, but as a flexible social instinct for what is possible and effective. As such, ritual mastery is the ability to generate culture deftly and appropriately nuanced and in a peculiar tension with other forms of cultural production. (1990: 306)

Bell's discussion of both the 'ritual body' and 'ritual mastery' drew primarily from notions present in Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, published in 1977. But in a series of articles published subsequently, Bourdieu further refined a number of concepts that can be used to supplement Bell's account. These concepts are very useful for the analysis of ritual action and, particularly, the use of ritual action as a means of constructing the 'ritual mastery' of an agent, such as a bishop or priest.

In an essay, 'Rites as Acts of Institution' (1992), Bourdieu described ritual 'consecration' or 'institution' as 'an act of social magic' that establishes (i.e. 'consecrates') a boundary, that is to say, a difference, which comes thereby to be considered legitimate or 'natural':

> [To] institute is to consecrate, that is to sanction and to sanctify, a state of affairs, an established order—which is precisely what, in the juridico-political sense of the word, a constitution does. Investiture … consists in sanctioning and sanctifying, in making known and recognized, a difference (preexistent or not); in making it exist as a social difference known and recognized by the agent thereby invested, and by others. (1992: 82)

Acts of consecration or institution, according to Bourdieu—whether they consist in graduation ceremonies, inauguration into political office, or ordination—have genuine power to change reality. The 'symbolic efficacy of rites of institution', as Bourdieu put it, consists in their ability to 'act on the real by acting on the representation of the real' (1992: 82). Such rites genuinely transform the persons who are consecrated by transforming the way that other people perceive and treat them, as well as the way that the consecrated persons perceive and treat themselves. As we will see below, Bourdieu's notion of 'consecration' or 'institution' helps to make sense of how certain rituals, such as marriage ceremonies, could become effective by providing the recipients of these actions (which generally consisted of ritual blessings by bishops) with a new status and identity.

A second theoretical insight derived from Bourdieu that can be helpfully applied to the issue of episcopal authority is found in his essay 'Social Space and Symbolic Power' (1989). Here Bourdieu emphasized the role of the consecrator as an authorized agent, that is, as one whom the community recognizes as having the authority to 'create worlds' (i.e. to make distinct groups) by speaking and defining their existence:

> Symbolic power, whose form par excellence is the power to make groups . . . has to be based on the possession of symbolic capital. The power to impose upon other minds a vision, old or new, of social divisions depends on the social authority acquired in previous struggles. Symbolic capital is a credit; it is the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition. (Bourdieu 1989: 22)

In the context of my discussion here, the authorized agent—that is, the person who has been recognized as having the authority to impose recognition—is the Christian bishop. The bishop possesses 'symbolic power' in Bourdieu's sense, namely, 'the power to make things with words', that is, the power to institute and consecrate, the power to draw boundaries and define roles within the Christian community, and the power to mediate salvation.

A third concept that Bourdieu developed in an essay entitled, 'Delegation and Political Fetishism' (1984–1985), involves the notion of 'delegation', which denotes the complex process by which a set of individuals constitute themselves as a social body by delegating to leaders the privilege of representing and speaking for the members of the group. According to Bourdieu's analysis, a common pattern emerges in the formation of groups as diverse as political parties and the Catholic Church: the group only exists as such (that is, as a social entity rather than as a mere collection of individuals) 'by delegating its power to a singular person (for instance, the pope, the secretary general) who can then act as a "moral person", that is to say, as a substitute for the group' (1984–1985: 56). Already in this first act of delegation, although it appears that the group has chosen its leader or representative, it is also the case that the existence of the leader (that is, the one who represents the group) and of his office effectively brings the group into existence.

Bourdieu also refers to a second act of delegation in which the social reality now constituted—which exists as the Church, the Party, etc.—deliberately gives to the representative his mandate: 'It is no longer the constituents who designate their delegate or representative, but the office which gives a mandate to an authorized agent' (1984–1985: 58). In this second act of delegation the institution and office of the representative come to take on (social) lives of their own, which produces what Bourdieu calls 'political fetishism'. 'Political fetishism' results when the representative identifies himself with the institution or sees himself as the source of his own authority. The result is a kind of mystification or 'idolatry' of the office: 'Political idolatry resides precisely in the fact that the value of the political person . . . appears as a mysterious objective property of the person, a charm, a charisma: the *ministerium* appears as a *mysterium*' (1984–1985: 57). The lofty titles and roles granted to the bishop in the passages from the *Apostolic Constitutions* would appear to support Bourdieu's claims.

These various concepts elaborated by Bourdieu enable us to fill out the framework elaborated by Bell. They describe some of the mechanisms by which rituals act to shape 'ritual bodies' and by which ritual leaders exercise their 'ritual mastery'. As we will see in the remainder of this chapter, bishops in late antiquity extended their authority into the daily, private lives of the laity by engaging in acts of 'consecration' that provided new identities and social roles to the recipients of these rituals: the emerging ritualization of marriage will illustrate this development. Moreover, the bishop's exercise of 'symbolic power' functioned simultaneously to enhance his own authority as one who had 'obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition' (Bourdieu 1989: 22). The newly acquired status of the Christian bishop in late antiquity was both displayed in and derived from these innovative ritual activities.

The Beginning of Episcopal Intervention in Marriage Rituals

Distinctively Christian marriage rituals took shape very slowly in the early church. While some scholars have argued for the existence of some kind of Christian nuptial liturgy as early as the second century (Stevenson 1983), no clear evidence of such a ritual exists prior to the fourth century. It is true that several New Testament texts show a strong interest in regulating marriage among Christian believers. The gospels preserve the tradition of Jesus' prohibition of divorce (Mark 10:5–9; Luke 16:18), with Matthew recording a significant exception: 'whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity (*porneia*), and marries another commits adultery' (Matt. 19:9; cf. 5:32). The apostle Paul attributed a similar prohibition to Jesus (1 Cor. 7:10–11) and expressed his own reservations about remarriage after the death of a spouse, although he laid down no law in the matter. Later New Testament texts spoke more positively about marriage and Christian

life in a household, but there are no indications of any specifically Christian marriage rituals (Eph. 5:21–33; Col. 3:18–22; 1 Tim. 4:1–5).

The same silence regarding a Christian marriage liturgy is evident throughout the second century. Sometime during the reign of Emperor Trajan (98–117), Bishop Ignatius of Antioch advised Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna that 'it is proper for men and women who marry to be united with the consent of the bishop (*meta gnōmēs tou episcopou*), so that the marriage may be in accordance with the Lord and not due to lustful passions' (Ign. *Pol*. 5.2; Holmes 2007: 267). About the same time in Rome the visionary prophet Hermas insisted that a man must divorce his wife, if he caught her in adultery, but that he had to remain unmarried, in case she repented of her sin (Herm. *Mand*. 4.29.4–6). But in neither text is there any mention of marriage rituals. Similarly, the Christian apologists of the second century frequently noted that Christians maintained the highest standards of marital morality, but they nowhere speak of any specifically Christian rites of betrothal or marriage (Diogn. 5.6–7; Justin, *1 Apol*. 29; Athenagoras, *Leg*. 33).

The situation we have described seems to have begun to change in the third century, although firm evidence of a Christian marriage liturgy remains elusive. In several passages, the North African writer Tertullian referred to Christians 'requesting' a marriage from church officials. For example, in his treatise *Concerning Monogamy*, written sometime after 213, when he was fully under the influence of the 'New Prophecy', Tertullian expressed his opposition to second marriages, addressing himself to the 'catholic' opposition thus:

> So, then, you propose to marry in the Lord, as the law and the Apostle require—supposing that you bother about this at all. But how will you dare request the kind of marriage which is not permitted to the ministers from whom you ask it, the bishop who is a monogamist, the presbyters and deacons who are bound by the same solemn obligation, the widows whose way of life you repudiate in your own person? Our adversaries, it is plain, will give husbands and wives in marriage indiscriminately, as they dole out pieces of bread, for thus they understand the text: *Give to everyone that asks of you*. They will join you together in a virgin church, the one spouse of the one Christ. (*Mon*. 11.1–2; Le Saint 1951: 93, slightly altered)

Tertullian's comments about 'requesting a marriage' (*matrimonium postulans*) from leaders of the church, who would 'join you together in a virgin church' (*coniungent vos in ecclesia virgine*) would appear to suggest some kind of formal recognition of a Christian marriage, but it remains unlikely that anything like a formal Christian ritual of marriage existed.

Similarly, in *Concerning Purity*, also a work written during his Montanist period, Tertullian noted that in order to avoid the suspicion of fornication, all Christians should profess their marriages publicly 'before the church' (*apud ecclesiam*):

> And so, among us, secret marriages, also, that is to say, those which are not first contracted before the church, run the risk of being judged the next thing to adultery and fornication. Nor may they, under the appearance of marriage, escape the charge of crime when they have been contracted because of it. (*Pud*. 4.4; Le Saint 1959: 62)

Tertullian's comments suggest that it may have become common in the North African churches of his day for Christians to seek some kind of official recognition of their marriages from church officials, although Tertullian says nothing explicit about a Christian marriage ritual, and it remains uncertain what form this profession *apud ecclesiam* took (Crouzel 1973).

One reason to take a minimalist view of Tertullian's statements is that in other writings he indicated that Christians normally followed the same ritual customs that pagans did in the celebration of their marriages. For example, in *Concerning Idolatry*, Tertullian argued that Christians were allowed to participate in traditional ceremonies of betrothal (*sponsalia*), nuptials (*nuptialia*), and namegiving (*nominalia*), because these ceremonies were not directly involved in idolatrous activity. In connection with the betrothal, he mentioned specifically the giving of a ring and observed: 'God no more prohibits nuptials to be celebrated than names to be given' (*Idol*. 16.3). By contrast, in *Concerning the Crown*, Tertullian rejected the practice of placing crowns on the heads of the married couple because he believed the crown carried idolatrous connotations (*Cor*. 13.4). In several other places he pointed out that women might receive a veil upon their betrothal, and perhaps also exchange a kiss with their intended bridegrooms (*Virg*. 12.1; *Or*. 22.4), although some scholars doubt how common these practices were (Treggiari 1991: 147–53).

The evidence from Tertullian suggests that third-century Christians in North Africa usually celebrated their betrothals and nuptials with the same rituals that non-Christians did. Tertullian approved of such practices, as long as they did not directly involve idolatrous activity. Tertullian's evidence coheres with what we know from the third-century church orders that were produced elsewhere in the Roman Empire, such as the *Apostolic Tradition* and the *Didascalia apostolorum*, neither of which contains any rubrics for the celebration of Christian marriages. In a similar vein, Bishop Cyprian of Carthage, in the middle of the third century, warned virgins not to attend weddings because of the licentious speech and drunkenness that prevailed there (*Hab. Virg*. 18). Cyprian seems to assume that other Christians would be present at these ceremonies, which differed in no way from the rituals of their pagan counterparts (Saxer 1969: 325–6). While there is no evidence of specifically Christian rituals of marriage, then, Tertullian indicates that it was common for Christians to seek some kind of official recognition of their marriage from the church community, and it is likely that the bishop would have played a significant role in providing this recognition.

Dotal Contracts and Nuptial Blessings

This situation, however, was about to change. By the fourth century we have significant evidence of episcopal intervention in marriages, from the signing of dotal contracts to the bestowal of nuptial blessings. The fourth- and fifth-century evidence of Christian marriage practice, however, varies widely from region to region. In some places in the East, the Christian clergy remained reserved about participating in marriage rituals,

which suggests that these rituals had been barely 'Christianized'. Marriage ceremonies remained largely family affairs conducted in the family home. For example, Bishop Gregory Nazianzus indicated to a correspondent that the father of the family was the one who should bestow the wedding crowns on the married couple, rather than the priest (*Ep*. 231.5). John Chrysostom, however, recommended that priests should be summoned to the family home to express 'prayers' (*euchai*) and 'blessings' (*eulogiai*) to ensure the bride's love and fidelity to her husband (*Hom. Gen*. 48.6; Ritzer 1970: 134–6). Nevertheless, even in Christian homes the customs associated with marriage often involved ribald entertainments that were considered inappropriate for the clergy to see. The Council of Laodicea, which met some time before 381 (Ohme 2012: 47), forbade the celebration of marriages during Lent (can. 52) and required the clergy to depart before the wedding plays began (can. 54). John Chrysostom frequently lamented Christian participation in raucous marriage celebrations, especially the traditional *domum deductio*, the parade of the bride from her father's house to her husband's (Hersch 2010: 140–4).

In the West, the situation was different, and marriage rituals had begun to develop a Christian character earlier than in the East, although it was still a piecemeal process that shows regional variation. Although neither Augustine nor the canons of the North African episcopal synods mention Christian rituals of marriage, nonetheless we begin to see fourth-century North African bishops gradually becoming a presence at wedding ceremonies in the family home (Hunter 2003). In his *Life of Augustine*, Possidius of Calama noted that Augustine was reluctant to become involved in the arrangement of marriages, but he recorded this significant exception: '[Augustine] said that when the spouses were in agreement on the matter, the bishop should, if asked, be present, so that their compacts (*pacta*) or agreements (*placita*) might be ratified or blessed' (*Vit. Aug*. 27.5).

What did Possidius (or Augustine) mean by having the marital agreements 'ratified' (*firmarentur*) or 'blessed' (*benedicerentur*)? Possidius seems to have had in mind the signing of marriage contracts (*tabulae matrimoniales*) in the family home, a practice to which Augustine frequently referred. The *tabulae matrimoniales* (also known as *tabulae nuptiales* or *tabulae dotales*) were written contracts that were an important (though not essential) legal component of Roman marriages. As Susan Treggiari has observed, 'The contract was drawn up carefully in advance of the wedding. It contained a statement of the contents of the dowry and agreements about what would happen to the dowry at the end of the marriage' (1991: 165). Although the contract was concerned mainly with dowry and property arrangements, it was also a public declaration of the intent to marry. One extant marriage contract, a fragmentary papyrus dating to *c*.100 CE, contains the signatures and seals of seven witnesses (Sanders 1938). In addition to the intent to marry and the contents of the dowry, this document also stated the purpose of the marriage: 'for the sake of producing children' (*liberorum procreandorum causa*), a phrase that Augustine was to repeat on numerous occasions (Marin 1976; Hunter 2003: 73–85).

According to Augustine, the marriage contracts were read aloud in the presence of multiple witnesses, apparently in the home of the father of the bride (*Serm*. 51.22; cf. *Conf*. 9.9.19). On that occasion a bishop might be present to sign the contracts: '*istis*

tabulis subscripsit episcopus', he noted in one place (*Serm*. 332.4). As Augustine remarked elsewhere, the permanence of the marriage bond, which lasts until the death of one of the spouses, should be considered like a set of shackles that prohibit divorce and remarriage:

> I want to say something about this to you who are young. Those shackles are iron-hard, so do not put your feet into them. Once you have, you will be very tightly constrained by your fetters. The hands of your bishop consolidate them and fasten them on to you. Men come running to this place seeking to divorce their wives, only to find that they are bound more tightly. No one loosens those fetters. (*Enarrat. Ps*. 149.15; Boulding 2004: 506)

Augustine's comment about the hands of the bishop 'consolidating' the bonds of marriage (*tales compedes consolidant vobis et episcopi manus*) is ambiguous: it could refer either to the signing of the marriage contracts or to the bestowal of a nuptial blessing. In either case, it appears that by the early fifth century, bishops in North Africa had begun to play an important role in the recognition of a marriage as a truly Christian marriage and, therefore, subject to Christian restrictions regarding divorce and remarriage. Whether or not a blessing was involved, the evidence from Augustine shows that bishops in North Africa had begun to enter the family home and to act as the official delegate of the church to confer legitimation on the newly married couple.

The Nuptial Blessing and Episcopal 'Consecration' of Marriage

Thus far, the evidence from Augustine and the prior Christian tradition has indicated only the rudimentary involvement of bishops in the ritual formation of marriages. There is, however, a significant body of evidence, mostly from other western sources, that tells a different story. In the latter years of the fourth century and early years of the fifth, a number of writers, primarily in Italy, spoke of nuptial blessings pronounced by bishops over Christian couples at weddings. The practice was mentioned by Ambrose and Ambrosiaster, as well as by several bishops of Rome. It appears that the custom had become so common that it was made a requirement for the marriages of the lower clergy. Moreover, in the early fifth century, Paulinus of Nola composed a marriage poem (*epithalamium*) that purports to describe a wedding that took place in a church. These and other sources enable us to trace the emergence of a new tradition of episcopal intervention in Christian marriage: the institution of a nuptial blessing.

The earliest references to the practice of a nuptial blessing are found in the writings of the mysterious biblical commentator now called 'Ambrosiaster', a presbyter at Rome active during the episcopate of Damasus (366–384), most likely in the early 380s (Hunter 2009: 9–13). This author, whose works originally circulated anonymously but were later

attributed to Ambrose and Augustine, spoke of the nuptial blessing on several occasions. In his commentary on Paul's first letter to the Corinthians 7:40 (the verse in which Paul stated that a widow would be happier if she did not remarry), Ambrosiaster observed:

> First marriages are celebrated in a lofty manner under the blessing of God, but second marriages lack glory even in the present. For they were conceded on account of a lack of self-control and because young women often violate their widowhood. (Vogels 1968: 90; author's translation)

Similarly, in a comment on the passage from 1 Timothy 3:12 about deacons being 'husbands of one wife', Ambrosiaster observed:

> [Paul] showed that they, too, should be husbands of one wife, in order that those men who had not gone beyond what God established should be chosen for the service of God. For God decreed that a man should have one wife with whom he is blessed, for no one is blessed with a second wife. (Vogels 1969: 268; author's translation)

In both passages Ambrosiaster noted that it was customary to bestow the nuptial blessing only on persons marrying for the first time. His rationale is that the paradigm of the Christian blessing was God's original blessing on the first human couple in paradise (Gen. 1:28); therefore, it should be used only at first marriages. In one of his *Questions on the Old and New Testaments*, Ambrosiaster even suggested that this blessing formula had been preserved in Jewish liturgy: 'The tradition of this matter remained in the synagogue and now is celebrated in the church' (*Quaest*. 127.3; Souter 1908: 400; author's translation). Ambrosiaster's comment implies that the blessing of the marriage created a significant distinction between first marriages and any subsequent ones. Christians who entered into second marriages were *ipso facto* entering into an inferior state of life. As we will see below, second marriages even disqualified men from entering into the clergy.

A similar sense of the importance of the marriage blessing at the hands of the bishop as a sign of the uniquely Christian character of the marriage is found in the writings of Ambrose, bishop of Milan, who used the nuptial blessing bestowed by a bishop as an argument against marriages between pagans and Christians:

> Since it is fitting that the marriage itself be consecrated by the priestly veiling and blessing (*velamine sacerdotali et benedictione*), how can it be called a marriage where there is no unanimity of faith? When prayer ought to be shared, how can conjugal charity be shared by those who differ in their devotion? (*Ep*. 62.7. Faller and Zelzer 1990: 124; author's translation)

For Ambrose, the 'priestly veiling and blessing' were the mark of a specifically Christian marriage and were not to be shared with those who did not share the Christian faith.

About the same time, that is, in the mid-380s, evidence from Siricius, who served as bishop of Rome from 385 to 399, indicates that a question had arisen regarding

the canonical status of the veiling and blessing of marriage at the hands of a bishop (*sacerdos*).[1] In the earliest document from his pontificate, a letter written to Bishop Himerius of Tarragona in 385, Siricius responded to questions that the Spanish bishop had sent to Damasus, Siricius' predecessor in the see of Rome. One of these questions pertained to the ritual of veiling and blessing at a wedding ceremony:

> You have inquired about the conjugal veil: if someone can take in marriage a girl who has been betrothed to another man. In every way we prohibit this from being done, because that blessing, which the bishop bestows upon the woman who is to be married, is the source of a kind of sacrilege among believers, if it is violated by any transgression. (*Ep*. 1.4; Zechiel-Eckes 2013: 90–2; author's translation)

The question posed to Siricius can be interpreted in two different ways. Either Himerius had assumed that the veil and blessing were bestowed at the betrothal, and he was asking whether the woman could marry another man after her betrothal; or the veil and blessing were bestowed after betrothal, and he was asking if it was legitimate to bless another marriage after betrothal (Ritzer 1970: 231). In either case, Siricius' response indicates that the bishop's action was considered a definitive act that marked the official formation of the marriage. Although there is no evidence to indicate that such blessings were required universally for a marriage to be considered legitimate, Siricius' ruling shows that this practice had become increasingly common: so common that it was necessary for him to provide a ruling on the question of its ritual efficacy.

Episcopal Blessing and the Ordination of Married Clergy

Siricius also sheds light on another aspect of the practice of ritual veiling and blessing. In the same letter to Himerius cited above, Siricius provided regulations on the ordination of the clergy. Commenting on the advancement of men to the rank of acolyte and subdeacon, Siricius observed that married candidates for these offices must have been married with the blessing of a bishop:

> If a man has lived in an upright manner from the beginning of his adolescence to the age of thirty, being content with one wife only—a woman whom he married as a virgin and received with the common blessing (*communi per sacerdotem benedictione*) through a bishop—he ought to be an acolyte and subdeacon. (*Ep*. 1.9; Zechiel-Eckes 2013: 104; author's translation)

[1] In the following passages I am translating *sacerdos* as 'bishop' rather than 'priest' to preserve the distinction between bishops and presbyters. Although presbyters were sometimes referred to as 'priests' (*sacerdotes*) in this period, the term *sacerdos* more commonly referred to bishops. See Gy (1957).

Siricius' ruling is important evidence of the role that the blessing of marriage by a bishop had come to assume in the church of Rome by the later decades of the fourth century. Although we have no evidence that an ecclesiastical blessing was required for the ordinary marriage of a layperson, the blessing by a bishop was now required for the marriage of a clergyman. Bestowed only on first marriages (that is, only upon those who married as virgins), the blessing of the bishop solemnly instituted or 'consecrated' the marriages of those who wished to progress in the church's hierarchy.

Innocent I, bishop of Rome from 401 to 417, provides further evidence of the significant role that the nuptial blessing played in defining a marriage that was appropriate to the clergy. In a letter to Bishop Victricius of Rouen, composed in February of 404, Innocent elaborated on the regulations provided by Siricius. Dealing specifically with the question of whether or not a marriage contracted before baptism should be counted as a legitimate marriage for a prospective clergyman, Innocent followed views previously expressed by Ambrose and Augustine, namely, that baptism eliminated sins, but not legitimate marriages. Innocent based his argument on the character of the nuptial blessing bestowed on the couple by the bishop. 'When the parents of the human race were joined together in paradise, they were blessed by the Lord himself,' he wrote. The same form of blessing is now practised in the church:

> The practice of the church itself shows that all bishops (*sacerdotes omnes*) preserve this formula … since we are taught that the blessing, which is placed by the bishop over those who are marrying, provides no grounds for transgression and it has preserved the formula that was instituted by God from of old. (*Ep*. 2.6; PL 20: 475; author's translation)

As Innocent presented the matter, the nuptial blessing bestowed by the bishop derived its efficacy from the fact that the bishop was repeating a formula (*forma*) that had first been instituted by God in paradise. The bishop thereby became the spokesman or delegate of God, who now acted as God before the marrying couple.

The cumulative evidence from Ambrosiaster, Ambrose, Siricius, and Innocent indicates that the intervention of the bishop in the marriage ceremony had become a prominent feature of Christian weddings by the early fifth century, at least in the churches of Italy. The veiling of the bride and bestowal of a blessing by the bishop 'consecrated' the marriage in the sense elaborated by Bourdieu: that is, it marked the creation of a new social identity for the Christian couple and the inception of a specifically Christian marriage with all of the privileges (sexual intercourse) and the restrictions (i.e. limitations on divorce and remarriage) that implied. Associated especially with the marriages of the clergy, the blessing of the bishop was 'an act of social magic' that established new boundaries: boundaries between pagan and Christian marriages, between first and second marriages, and between lay and clerical marriages.

The Bishop's Expanding Role: The Liturgical Evidence

As we move further into the fifth century, evidence of the importance of the bishop's bestowal of the nuptial blessing increases. The *Statuta ecclesiae antiqua*, a fifth-century collection of canons that originated in Gaul, required that a newly married couple should remain sexually continent on the night of their wedding 'out of respect for that blessing':

> When the bridegroom and bride are about to be blessed, they are offered either by their parents or by the bridal attendants (*paranymphis*), and since they have received the blessing, they should remain in virginity for that night out of respect for that blessing (*pro reverentia ipsius benedictionis*). (can. 13; Munier 1974: 345; author's translation)

Earlier in the fifth century, the anonymous Latin author of the *Praedestinatus*, who wrote in Rome under Pope Sixtus III (432–440), is the first witness of the celebration of a nuptial mass. In Book III he referred to *sacerdotes* 'blessing the beginning of marriages, consecrating and joining them in the mysteries of God' (PL 53: 67; Ritzer 1970: 225).

Of special interest to my argument here, however, is the role of the bishop's blessing in the making of the bishop's own authority. In fifth-century western sources we find more frequent references to the bishop's prominence in the marriage ceremony. A key text in this regard is the famous *epithalamium* (*Car.* 25) of Paulinus of Nola, written on the occasion of the wedding of Julian, future bishop of Eclanum and opponent of Augustine, to his bride Titia. While not, strictly speaking, a 'liturgical' text, Paulinus' poem purports to describe a Christian wedding ceremony that took place within a church building. For example, he speaks of Bishop Memor, father of Julian, leading the couple 'in front of the altar' (*ante altaria*). Although we must allow for a certain amount of poetic licence, Paulinus ascribed a great deal of agency to the bishops conducting the ceremony.

In the beginning of his poem Paulinus attributed to God the establishment of the marital union at the dawn of creation: 'With his own lips God consecrated the work of this covenant, and with the divine hand he established a pair of human beings' (*Car.* 25.15–16; Hartel 1894: 238). But by the end of the poem Paulinus had moved the bishop into the central position in the ritual:

> May your father the bishop bless you,
> May he chant chaste songs with the attending chorus.
> Kindly Memor, lead your children before the altar,
> Entrust them to the Lord with a prayer and a sanctifying hand. (*sanctificante manu*. *Car.* 25.199–202; Hartel 1894: 244)

At this point in his poem Paulinus portrayed the entrance of Bishop Aemilius, the father of Julian's bride Titia. Since Aemilius is the senior cleric, Memor, following standard procedure (*ordine recto*), entrusts the couple into the hands of Bishop Aemilius:

> Aemilius then joins their two heads in the marital peace.
> Veiling them with his right hand, he sanctifies them with a prayer.
> Christ, O Christ, hear the pleas of your priests,
> Give ear to the pious prayers of these holy suppliants.
> Christ, inspire the newly married through the holy bishop,
> Assist their pure hearts through his chaste hands,
> That both of them may share a harmonious desire for virginity,
> Or else become the seedbed of holy virgins. (*Car*. 25.227–34; Hartel 1894: 245)

It would be naive to assume that Paulinus is describing in precise detail a typical Christian marriage ceremony. After all, as Searle and Stevenson have observed, 'this is very definitely a clerical marriage and can hardly be said to reflect the outlook of the average Christian family' (Searle and Stevenson 1992: 30). Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that Paulinus is sketching in broad strokes the critical role of the bishop in veiling and blessing the Christian couple. Of special significance is his repeated reference to the 'sanctifying' character of the episcopal blessing. As both Ambrose and Siricius had previously observed, it was the ritual action of the bishop that 'consecrated' the Christian marriage, that is, that marked its uniquely 'Christian' character and established its difference from other unions.

By the early sixth century we see yet a further step in this development: prayers for the blessing of marriage unions had acquired formal character in the West and were gathered into collections, such as the *Verona Sacramentary* and, later, the *Gelasian Sacramentary* and the *Hadrianum* (Ritzer 1970: 238–46; Searle and Stevenson 1992: 40–54). Consisting of prayers to be pronounced (most likely by bishops) on the occasion of a nuptial veiling, these blessings provided an opportunity for the clergy to define the origin and purposes of marriage, especially its procreative aspect.

Given its formal character, it is striking that the earliest text, the *Verona Sacramentary*, is barely Christianized. Except for a brief statement—'May she marry in Christ as one faithful and chaste'—there are no explicitly Christian images or allusions in the blessing (Ritzer 1970: 423). By contrast, the blessing in the *Hadrianum*, which dates from the eighth century and builds upon the blessing in the *Verona Sacramentary*, contains an explicit reference to marriage as a figure of the union between Christ and the church: 'O God, you have consecrated the bond of marriage with such an excellent mystery in order to prefigure in the marriage pact the sacrament of Christ and the church' (Deshusses 1971: 310).

But even without an extended and explicit reference to Christ and the church, the appearance of formalized prayers for the 'consecration' of Christian marriages marked a significant step forward in the development of episcopal authority. The liturgical texts 'canonized', as it were, the role of the clergy in instituting Christian marriages.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have charted the development of early Christian rituals of marriage with special attention to the role of the clergy (primarily bishops) in these rituals. I have argued that the increasing involvement in marriage ritual was a means by which bishops both acquired and displayed their authority via 'ritual mastery'. We have also seen that the emergence of a blessing bestowed on first marriages served as way of instituting distinction not only between pagan and Christian marriages, but also between first and second marriages, and even between clerical and lay marriages (the latter not requiring such a ritual). I would like to conclude by suggesting that these rituals of veiling and blessing might have instituted and 'consecrated' a boundary of another kind: that between male and female. All of the extant blessings in the earliest sacramentaries were directed exclusively towards the bride and tended to stress behaviour that was appropriate to women. The blessing prayers also emphasized the subordination of the wife to her husband and legitimized this distinction by appeal to the creation stories and to the derivation of the woman from the man. For example, the *Verona Sacramentary* reads: 'Thus it was inevitably your desire that, because what you made similar to man was much weaker than what you made similar to yourself, the weaker sex added to the stronger made one out of two' (Ritzer 1970: 422). This text implies the Pauline teaching that the man was made in the image of God, but woman in the image of man (cf. 1 Cor. 11:7).

Pierre Bourdieu has observed that 'rites which are sexually differentiated consecrate the difference between the sexes. They constitute as a lawful distinction, as an institution, what is a simple difference of fact' (1992: 82). Did ritual veiling and blessing function to consecrate the boundaries between male and female? The seventh-century bishop Isidore of Seville certainly thought so. Writing in his *Ecclesiastical Offices*, Isidore noted:

> [W]hen they are married, [women] are veiled, so that they will know always to be subject to their husbands and humble. They call this veiling 'bad luck' (*mavors*) in popular speech, that is, 'of Mars', because the sign of marital dignity and power is in the man, for 'the husband is the head of his wife'. (*De ecclesiasticis officiis* 20.6; Knoebel 2008: 99)

And at least one ecclesiastical writer saw the veil specifically as a symbol of the *bishop's* authority. Commenting on Paul's discussion of the veiling of women in church (1 Cor. 11:4–16), Ambrosiaster observed that women must have a 'power' (that is, a veil) over their heads 'out of reverence for the bishop' (*propter reverentiam episcopalem*). Women should be silent and veiled in church, he argued, both because sin originated with them and 'because the bishop has the role (*personam*) of Christ, for he is the delegate (*vicarius*) of the Lord' (Vogels 1968: 123).

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CHAPTER 37

WOMEN'S RITUALS AND WOMEN'S RITUALIZING

JULIETTE J. DAY

Introduction

Why a chapter on 'women' in this book? Surely women participated in the rituals examined in the other chapters? The other chapters are, admittedly, not solely concerned with men's rituals and ritualizing, but far too often women's participation in and understanding of Christian rituals are assumed to be identical. As Teresa Berger (2011) has pointed out, both our ancient sources, and the authorized ritual practices whose performance they describe, provide interpretations from elite men, such that the voice and presence of women, 'men who are just men', transgender or intersexed people, or eunuchs are also barely discernible. Gender studies has rightly moved on from the binary division of gender into simply female and male; and late antique studies have brought to light the nuances of gender in religious identity especially as they apply to women, for example, as transvestite monks or as displaying 'virility' by their ascetic achievements. There is still room, though, for an investigation of women's ritual activity which transcends their social status: that is, in relation to the physical and biological operation of women's bodies.

Susan White (2003: 29) articulates the position of many feminist scholars that women's ritualizing extends beyond the hierarchical and liturgical, beyond the public sphere, to where women were able to be creative and direct their own lives. This is also the premise of *Ritualizing Women* (Northup 1997), a study of contemporary rituals devised by and for women and which arise out of their unique physical, social, and religious contexts. The question for scholars of early Christianity is, did late antique women behave similarly? The evidence is scant, but it does exist. Evidence for women's monasteries indicates the presence of strong female leaders (e.g. Macrina, Olympias, Melania the Younger) who directed the prayer and ascetic programme of their institution; although this evidence is hagiographical and the sources display typological features,

at least the, invariably, male writer acknowledged female-directed ritual practice. For other women, as Berger observes, 'the household arguably was the most basic, daily, and influential site for ritualizing faith' (2011: 44). The activities at household shrines and chapels indicate that even men ritualized away from the formal liturgical gatherings of the church (see Bowes 2008), and instructions were also provided for how wives of non-Christian men should perform rituals around prayer and home communion at home in ordinary domestic space (Tertullian, *Ux*. 2.4–5). Later we will note that in relation to rituals around death, women's roles transcended the private and public in socially acceptable ways.

Of course, women did participate in the hierarchically determined and authorized rituals of the church, what we call 'liturgy' (see Taft 1998; Meyer 1999); they were exorcized (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatech*. 14), baptized, heard sermons, sang psalms (some even in women's choirs, *Vit. Mac*. 29; see Quasten 1941) and received the Eucharist (after the ministers, the men, and the ascetics, but before the children in *Const. ap*. 8.13.14); they celebrated feast days and walked in processions (Egeria, *It. Eg*. 31). Limited liturgical roles were assigned to deaconesses during the baptism of women (e.g. *Did. apost*. 16), and consecrated widows might even be permitted in the sanctuary during the Eucharist (*Test. Dom*. 1.19). And, as David Hunter (2016) has shown, the consecration of virgins and widows, and the ordination of deaconnesses were public ways of acknowledging their leadership in relation to the authority of the bishop. For other baptized Christian women, though, whether married or unmarried, their liturgical participation could be constrained by the social and theological interpretations of women's bodies due to beliefs about inherent inferiority and weakness, and a deep concern/fear about their biological functions, particularly menstruation and childbirth. This could be manifested in ritual restrictions or prohibitions, and by forms of ritualization.

Women's Bodies

Ritual encodes meaning in and through bodies, and in some key respects women's bodies are different from men's; thus, it should be no surprise to find that women in many cultures have engaged in rituals which relate to their bodily experience and that, because of the otherness of women's bodies, this ritualization could cause anxiety among male hierarchies. As Meyers noted, 'Women's religious culture can be considered most relevant with respect to the biological asymmetry of humans. That is, the exclusivity of women's reproductive capacity produced associated religious practices exclusive to women' (2005: 16). Textual and archaeological evidence reveals that ancient Israelite culture knew of women-led, non-priestly rituals connected to fertility, pregnancy, childbirth, and care of the infant which display specialist ritual knowledge between women that 'empowered them as major religious actors in their households' (Meyers 2005: 69; see also Berger 2011: 45).

Menstruation is a specific feature of women's life experience which is not shared by men. From puberty to the menopause, women have a monthly discharge of blood, exceptions being pregnant women and those with amenorrhea. Despite its near universal female experience, early Christian sources treat menstruation as abnormal and this is evident in the regulations about liturgical participation for menstruating women and in praise for the ascetic body, i.e. the non-menstruating, due to a restricted diet, which aspires to 'maleness'. For ascetic women, the cessation of menstruation was, therefore, a sign of spiritual progress. It is interesting that in the legends of transvestite monks their female gender is only discovered after death (Euphrosyne), or when erroneously accused of fathering a child (Margaret/Pelagius of Egypt), or occasionally by spiritual discernment (Hilaria), but never by menstruation (see Anson 1974; Davis 2002; Lubinsky 2013). Even ascetic women who continued to dress as women seem not to have been troubled by menstruation to judge by the hagiographical and ascetic literature. One notable, but not explicit, exception appears in Augustine's 'Rule for Nuns': 'The washing of the body and the use of the baths should not be too frequent, but it should be permitted at the usual interval of time, that is once a month' (*Ep*. 211.13; Teske 2005: 26).

Discharges of blood by women could render them ineligible for participation in baptism and the Eucharist; indeed, in some cases the menstruating woman was even forbidden to enter the church. Early Christian texts present different opinions about the place of menstruating women in liturgical gatherings and on the reasons for and against any prohibitions; these reflect to an extent the theological schools of Antioch and Alexandria. We note that these matters are discussed in the particular genre of 'Church Order': texts which claim universal authority for their regulations by appeal to apostolic authorship, while simultaneously displaying their regional and ecclesial particularity (see Bradshaw 2015). In the 'apostolic' ritual regulations, the author's own context and theological preferences are barely disguised. The relevant sections on menstruation and ritual purity are based on the purity code of Lev. 15:19–30, even if this text is not explicitly cited, and thus the issue is not just menstruating women's status in the community, but also the interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures in the Church and the application of Jewish law to Christian life and practice.

In the third-century Syrian text, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, the writer condemns some women converts from Judaism who are still keeping the purity laws concerning liturgical participation during menstruation (*Did. apost*. 26). These women believed that during menstruation the Holy Spirit left them for seven days, and so they absented themselves from prayer, reading scripture, and attending the Eucharist. The writer argues that impurity is caused by sin, and that the Holy Spirit is received once-for-all time at baptism and is thus not 'subject to the cyclical habits of their physical bodies' (Fonrobert 2000: 178). The women are mistaken if they consider bathing after menstruation to be a purificatory ritual which will restore the Holy Spirit; to do so would imply that this washing is equivalent to baptism. Over a century later, a similar interpretation is evident in Theodoret of Cyrrhus' *Questions on Leviticus* (XXI) where he argues that something which is natural cannot be considered unclean (although he supports the

ban on men having sex with menstruating women in order to protect women from unwanted attention at this time).

Origen's exegetical method resulted in a spiritualizing of the physical body and consequently 'menstruation becomes a discursive non-event', as Fonrobert puts it (2000: 203); he does not mention it in his *Homilies on Leviticus*, although he does discuss impurity after childbirth (see Berger 2011: 122). His former student Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria (died 265), in his letter to Basilides did, however, assert that the Levitical purity laws are to be applied to Christians.

> The question touching women in the time of their separation, whether it is proper for them when in such a condition to enter the house of God, I consider a superfluous inquiry. For I do not think that, if they are believing and pious women, they will themselves be rash enough in such a condition either to approach the holy table or to touch the body and blood of the Lord. Certainly the woman who had the issue of blood of twelve years' standing did not touch the Lord Himself, but only the hem of His garment, with a view to her cure. For to pray, however a person may be situated, and to remember the Lord, in whatever condition a person may be, and to offer up petitions for the obtaining of help, are exercises altogether blameless. But the individual who is not perfectly pure both in soul and in body, shall be interdicted from approaching the holy of holies. (Dionysius, *Canon* II; ANF 6: 96)

Menstruants may pray as that does not require ritual purity, but they may not enter the church, nor approach the altar at the Eucharist; as Berger comments, although Dionysius finds the answer obvious, it would seem that Basilides is less certain (Berger 2011: 103). Rules which were once applied to the Temple, but according to the Mishnah not to the synagogue in this period (m.Ber. 3.1–2), are now applied to the church building (see Cohen 1991: 282–3). These restrictions were repeated by Timothy of Alexandria in his *Canonical Responses* (c385).

> Question VII. Can a menstruous woman communicate?
> Answer. Not until she be clean.
> (*NPNF*^{2} 14: 613)

There was greater consensus over the temporary prohibition of baptism during menstruation. Thus, Timothy again:

> Question VI. The day appointed for the baptism of a woman; on that day it happened that the custom of women was upon her; ought she then to be baptized?
> Answer. No, not till she be clean. (*NPNF*^{2} 14: 613)

Timothy, though, does not say what he means by 'clean'—does he mean ritually clean by the cessation of menstruation, or physically clean after bathing? The delay before baptism was usually to be only a few days, or from the end of menstruation plus one day as in *Testamentum Domini* 2.6: 'But if any women be in the customary flux, let her also

take in addition another day, washing and bathing beforehand' (Cooper and Maclean 1902: 121). The instruction to bathe before baptism should be read in conjunction with the previous general instruction that all should bathe on the fifth day of the last week before baptism, it was not therefore specifically for purification after menstruation.

More extensive ritual prohibitions and restrictions apply after childbirth, both for the mother and even for the midwives, again following the purity laws of Lev. 12. The Egyptian, *Canons of Hippolytus* (dated to *c.*330s) 'demotes' midwives after delivery:

> The midwives are not to partake of the mysteries, until they have been purified … if the child which they have delivered is male, twenty days; if it is female, forty days … If she goes to the house of God before being purified, she is to pray with the catechumens. (*Can. Hipp*. 18; Bradshaw and Bebawi 1987: 20; see Berger 2011: 124–5)

The practical problems of this are noted by *Can. Hipp*., although the solution does not entail a relaxing of the ritual prohibition: 'The midwives are to be numerous so that they may not be outside all their lives.' The Syrian Theodoret has a more benign interpretation of Lev. 12 that does not mention ritual purity. Here the intention of the Law was to permit women to rest after childbirth and not to be pestered by their husbands wanting to resume sexual relations by telling them she was unclean (*Questions on Levitucus*, IX).

The classical treatment of this subject from an anthropological perspective is that of Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Purity and Taboo*, first published in 1966. She connects ideas of pollution and danger to the maintenance of authority, to express the ideal social order, and their reverse for the preservation of the sacred, for atonement, and salvation. To conform to the rules is to be 'set apart', to be perfect in order to approach 'the holy', either God himself or, as in Leviticus, the Temple; to transgress is, therefore, to be separated from God's blessing and thus from well-being (1966: 52). Ideas about holiness are given a physical and performative aspect (1966: 53) so that they might act as signs to inspire meditation on the oneness, purity, and completeness of God; ritual purity thereby functioned as 'a meaningful part of the great liturgical act of recognition and worship which culminated in the sacrifice in the Temple' (1966: 58). The regulations and rituals also construct social boundaries by excluding those who infringe the laws who are considered polluted and dangerous. Douglas' interpretation focused only on the dietary laws in Leviticus, but if we look back to Dionysius' response to Basilides, we can see that he too is concerned about the danger posed by impure, menstruating, women at the Eucharist.

More recent commentators have also reflected on purity laws as a means to assert authority and maintain social cohesion (see Kazen, Chapter 13 in this volume). According to Catherine Bell's taxonomy, rituals around menstruation would be categorized as among the 'rites of affliction' which 'attempt to rectify a state of affairs that has been disturbed or disordered' (1997: 115). Among rituals concerning pollution, immediate purification is usually demanded to avoid negative consequences, and thus physical purification is linked to spiritual cleansing. These rites 'illustrate complex cultural interpretations of the human condition and its relation to a cosmos of benign and malevolent

forces' (Bell 1997: 119). They are effective in relation to the maintenance of the social order, and express belief in an ordered cosmos in which the divine and human cooperate to restore harmony.

What is noticeable in the early Christian ritual prohibitions around menstruation is the way that they reinforce the normative, complete Christian community expressed around the altar at the Eucharist. The prohibitions seek to avoid a transgression of the sacred presence there, but they can only assert this by delineating the community boundaries of those entitled to be there. On the one hand then, women's menstrual cycle becomes the symbol for the establishment, maintenance, and restoration of the Body of Christ; the emissions are abnormal in a way that is analogous to sin and apostasy. In the *Didascalia* it is most interesting to note that the Eucharistic community is not to be defined in this way; the community is formed through the indelible effects of baptism, performed once only. In this community the boundaries are to be drawn in relation to Judaism, even though the women themselves seem concerned to maintain the pure state achieved at baptism. For the Egyptian sources, the implication is that the community reforms itself at each Eucharist and the regular exclusion and inclusion of menstruating women serve as a symbol of the necessary purity required by all in order to participate in the sacrament of the altar. But one can clearly see that the ritual prohibitions place the burden of community cohesion on those women experiencing an unconscious physical event over which they have no control; it is, therefore, quite unlike sin or apostasy, for which the participant has personal moral responsibility.

Women, Family, and Ritual

The social norm, expressed so clearly by many Christian and non-Christian commentators, was that public and official life was the preserve of men, whereas the private and domestic was women's realm. However, since the first Christian communities worshipped in domestic spaces and women appear to have functioned as head of the households, the lines between public and private are blurred (see Osiek and Macdonald 2006: 144–63). Even for the later centuries when the institutional structures of the church were established in the public sphere, Bowes has charted how it was the religion of the domestic sphere that drove the public ritual expressions: there was, she says, an 'eruption of the private into the public' (2008: 10).

With such blurring it is interesting to note the ways in which ritual scholars have attempted to separate the public from the private as the focus of their study through definitions of 'ritual' that then constitute what is proper for the discipline of 'ritual studies'. In many instances 'ritual' is distinguished from 'social practice' or 'popular piety', but is connected to 'liturgy'. The ritual taxonomy is often related to the formal and hierarchical, usually patriarchal, rituals linked to the public exercise of power (religious or political). Consequently, chief among the 'non-rituals' are those connected to women's

physicality or social functions; here we will investigate just two: (1) rituals around conception, pregnancy, and childbirth; and (2) those around death.

Rituals around conception, pregnancy, and giving birth in early Christian communities are hard to access. (Even a notable source book about early Christian women has nothing on these subjects: Miller 2005.) Male theologians who frequently use the womb as a theological symbol seem happily oblivious to its actual function in human reproduction. It is somewhat astonishing that the sources are relatively silent about such a commonplace occurrence, especially as Meyers (2005) charted the extensive ritual practices by Jewish women and Alice Mary Talbot has described the 'significant increase in the amount of evidence' for the ritual and spiritual life of Byzantine women from the ninth century. In later centuries, sterile women, or those who were pregnant and feared miscarriage might wear amulets with inscriptions or icons, have icons of specific female saints for prayer, or make visits to holy men and women, or to the shrines of saints. In labour, some women made their confession and received the Eucharist, and, if the birth was difficult, relatives might go to shrines for prayer or to obtain a relic with miraculous powers (Talbot 2006: 206–7).

Some of these Byzantine practices may be glimpsed in the late antique sources. It seems that earlier Christians used a similar repertoire of items: amulets used against sickness were included in a list of things to avoid given by Cyril of Jerusalem to his catechumens (*Catech*. 4.37), although he does not seem to be specifically addressing women. Principally, the hagiographical material suggests that physical anxiety or outright danger is to be alleviated by appeal to a saint or a holy man. Theodoret of Cyrrhus records that Romanos included helping sterile women among his healing activities (*Hist. Rel*. XI.4), and Symeon Stylites responded positively to the sterile 'Queen of the Ishamaelites' who sent her officials to ask that she could become a mother (*Hist. Rel*. XXVI.21). But Theodoret has experience closer to home:

> My mother lived with my father for thirteen years without becoming the mother of children for she was sterile and prevented by nature from bearing fruit. This did not greatly trouble her, … But childlessness greatly distressed my father, who went around everywhere begging the servants of God to ask for children for him from God. The others promised to pray … but this man (Macedonius) gave an explicit assurance that he would ask for a single son from the Creator of the universe and promised to obtain his petition. When three years had passed and the assurance had not been fulfilled, my father hastened again to demand what had been promised. The other told him to send his wife. When my mother arrived, the man of God said he would ask for a child and obtain one, and that it would be fitting to give the child back to the one who gave it. When my mother begged to receive only spiritual salvation and escape from hell-fire, he replied, 'In addition to that, the munificent one will also give you a son, for to those who ask sincerely he grants their petitions twofold.' My mother returned from there bearing away the blessing contained in his assurance. And in the fourth year of the promise she conceived and bore a burden in her womb; …
>
> In the fifth month of her pregnancy there occurred a danger of miscarriage. She again sent to her new Elisha—her affliction prevented her from hastening

> herself—to remind him that she had not wanted to become the mother of children and to confront him with his promises … So taking his stick, he arrived with this support; on entering the house, he gave as usual the greeting of peace …. '… drink this water', said the man of God, 'and you will feel God's help'. So she drank as directed, and the danger of a miscarriage vanished. (*Hist. Rel.* XIII.16–17; Price 1985: 105–6)

In rituals around death and commemoration of the deceased (see Gudme, Chapter 20 in this volume), women were the 'primary actors' as Corely has argued (2010: 17–18), which is reflected in the primary role of women as witnesses to the resurrection in the Gospels. These cannot be relegated to 'private' or 'family' rituals given the public nature of funerals (Corley 2010: 22). Traditionally, women's roles were to prepare the body for burial as an extension of their care for the sick, which we can see in the active role of Lampadion and Vetiana in the preparation of Macrina, even though the saint had entrusted the funeral arrangements to her brother (Gregory of Nyssa, *Vit. Mac.* 27–34). Palladius reports that women monks in the Pachomian monasteries washed the bodies and then carried them to the river singing psalms where the male monks would take over for the burial on the other side (*Lausiac History* 33). Receiving communion before death, the *viaticum*, was important (Grabka 1953: 21–43): Melania the Younger received communion three times during the delayed deathbed scene at the hands of her priest (Gerontius, *Vit. Mel.* 66–8), but more commonly it seems the practice of reserving the Eucharistic elements at home meant that it could be administered by family members, even women. Women led the lamentation, although Gregory of Nyssa wished to direct it into harmonious and orderly psalmody at Macrina's burial: 'the other virgins cried out … and a disorderly confusion overthrew the orderly and sacred character of the psalmody, with everyone else sobbing at the wailing of the virgins' (*Vit. Mac.* 37.1: Silvas 2008: 144).

It is women who organize funerary banquets. Tulloch (2006) has remarked upon the banquet scenes depicted in frescos in the third- to fourth-century catacombs of SS Marcellino and Pietro, Rome. Here there is the repeated image of a woman raising the cup at the beginning of a meal for between four and seven male and female participants, alongside are the inscriptions '*Agape*' and '*Irene*' which refer to the toasts offered and are not personal names. In Rome, funerary banquets were held on the day of burial, nine days afterwards (the *refrigerium*) and again annually at the *Parentalia* held in February (see Dolansky, Chapter 10 in this volume). Augustine records his mother's practice at the tombs with disapproval, even as he commends her self-restraint:

> After bringing her basket of ceremonial food which she would first taste and then share round the company, she used to present not more than one tiny glass of wine diluted to her very sober palate. She would take a sip as an act of respect. If there were many memorial shrines of the dead which were to be honoured in that way, it was one and the same cup she carried about and presented at each place. The wine was not merely drenched with water but also quite tepid; the share she gave to those present was only small sips. Her quest was for devotion, not pleasure. (*Conf.* 6.2.2; Chadwick 1991: 91)

Monica's (and Augustine's) concern about drunkenness was echoed by Ambrose of Milan (*On Fasting and Lent* 17.62), and in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (8.44). Both Corley and Tulloch comment that although all these practices are predominantly 'private' in the sense that they were for family members, they took place in the public sphere.

Are these rituals? We can see in Berger's critique of the way in which liturgical history has been gender-blind, that caution needs to be exercised when using scholarly definitions of ritual. In *Vit. Mac.* there are two references to the evening lighting of the lamps with prayers: in 23.5 'the voice of the psalm-singers was summoning us to the thanksgiving at the lighting of the lamps' and Macrina sends Gregory to join the communal evening prayer in church attended by the monks and virgins; then, in 27.2 the lamp is brought into where the dying saint lay and she 'gazed towards the beam of light, making it clear that she was eager to sing the thanksgiving at the lighting of the lamps' (Silvas 2008: 125). Berger observes, 'Robert Taft's comment on Macrina's recitation of the thanksgiving over the light, namely that it shows that "the domestic lamp ritual was still in vogue in spite of its adoption into the church service", betrays a supercessionist sense of the relationship between domestic and public ritual space' (Berger 2011: 51–2). This chimes in with the work of Kim Bowes who showed how private, domestic 'rituals' have, in the scholarship, been relegated to social practice or customs, or habits, or popular piety, etc., in the same way that Macrina's *private* lamp ceremony is to be contrasted with the *liturgical* celebration of evening prayer. Given the absence of women from ritual leadership in much late antique Christianity, such ancient and modern perspectives serve to remove domestic rituals, in which women figure prominently, from the sphere of ritual enquiry.

Ronald Grimes has commented on definitions of 'ritual' that, 'Current writing about ritual tempts one to conclude that the phenomenon is either everywhere or nowhere' (2014: 188). He notes Victor Turner's distinction between a transformative 'ritual' and a confirmatory 'ceremony', Roy Rappaport's definition of ritual as 'more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the actors', and then charts his own many different attempts to define 'ritual' over nearly 40 years. In *The Craft of Ritual Studies*, Grimes distinguishes between 'ritual' as a scholarly concept, 'rites' or 'rituals' as that which people enact, and 'ritualization' as the act (or process) of creating rites (2014: 192–3): 'in studying ritual' he says, 'we need a concept, ritualization, to designate the basic ordinary stuff out of which special rites emerge' (2014: 193). The latter permits ritualization in daily life to be explored, avoids the distinction between ritual and not ritual, while asserting that there are 'degrees of ritualization' (2014: 193).

Catherine Bell also noted the tendency to use 'ritual' for a 'special activity inherently different from daily routine', and 'ritual-like actions' where 'a variety of common activities … are "ritualized" ' (1997: 138). These she classifies according to their distinctive attributes (formalism, traditionalism, disciplined invariance, rule-governance, sacral symbolism, and performance), noting that what is important is the body and its relationship to the environment around it—both natural and socially constructed (1997: 139). Among the attributes of 'ritual-like activities', that of sacral symbolism seems to provide a useful way with which to explore the women's domestic rituals discussed in this

section. Such symbolic actions may not have an explicit relationship to a divine being, but they necessarily imply belief in such a being and the necessity of human response. In this section we have discussed regularly repeated non-liturgical domestic activities in which the divine is invoked in a particular way to respond to identified problems with conception, pregnancy, and childbirth, such that the whole process is removed from ordinary human, especially sexual, activity and reconstituted as a divine action through this sequence of actions:

- appeal to God's intermediary (saint or holy man);
- divine response mediated in speech, or by miraculous object;
- faithful acceptance by the woman (and/or by her husband);
- resolution of the problem.

In the textual sources, these are framed as pious actions and faithful responses to God.

Bell observes:

> In particular, ritual-like activities reveal an even more fundamental dimension of ritualization—the simple imperative to do something in such a way that the doing itself gives the acts a special or privileged status. The style of doing creates a type of framework around the act that communicates the message 'this has extra significance' … How they do these things can set these activities off, both to the participants and to others, as bearing a nonroutine significance. (1997: 166)

Her attribute of 'formalism' is important for women's ritualizing around death—the lack of grand speeches, overly symbolic gestures, hierarchical leadership—present these rituals in a very different way than gatherings presided over by the bishop in which the community displays its identity to itself and to the divine. However, they do display ritualization in the preparation of the body, wailing as the traditional grief response of women (but not men), the repetition of formalized eating with the deceased, the belief that the significance transcends these actions and the locations (see Bell 1997: 164–9).

Women and Ritual Leadership in Christian Communities

The issue of women's liturgical leadership has received renewed attention in the last sixty years as Western churches have looked to the early church for evidence to support the ordination of women in the contemporary church. The sources do indeed indicate that the Fathers disapprove of women in any sort of leadership role, sometimes citing the Pauline injunction that 'man is the head of women' (1 Cor. 11:3) and the example of Mary, or simply appealing to social custom and good sense. There is also clear evidence that women did perform officially sanctioned liturgical rituals and had a visible presence in

liturgical gatherings; thus, the roles of deaconesses, widows, and abbesses were acceptable when under the authority of the bishop. However, women's liturgical leadership, whether over men or in women-only contexts, is normally considered transgressive and an indicator of heretical beliefs or practices.

In many Western churches from the 1970s onwards, the influence of feminist theologians and critiques of women's role in traditional religious practices encouraged the development of women's spiritual and religious groups, whose members continued to participate in the official rites of the churches, but also formed distinct women-only groups at which liturgical rituals took place (see Northup 1997). It is among these groups that one observed 'women's ritualizing'; what Grimes would define as 'the activity of incubating ritual … the act of constructing ritual either self-consciously and deliberately or incrementally and editorially …' (1993: 5). Bell considered 'ritualization' to be a natural and appropriate response to a specific context in which the actions 'reorder and reinterpret' so as to fit the experience of the body, community, and cosmos (1992: 109). Thus Northup continues, 'Through ritualization, then, women "reorder and reinterpret" converting male-oriented symbols and rituals to a female-oriented belief-system' (1997: 21). Interestingly the impetus for ritualization is a sense of marginalization within the ritual practice of the parent or dominant religion, but as Grimes comments, the consequence of ritualization is also marginalization because, 'Ritualization is not often socially supported. Rather, it happens in the margins on the thresholds; therefore, it is alternately stigmatized and eulogized …' (Grimes 1990: 10; quoted in Northup 1997: 22).

In the examples explored in this section, we shall see that a similar impetus which has driven women's ritualizing in mainstream contemporary churches is also evident in some early Christian communities. Here we shall notice that women are connected to the ritual language and theology of the church, but in women-only groups they 'reorder and reinterpret' these to create new rites which, as Grimes has noted, were marginal and stigmatized.

In *Panarion,* his compendium of heresies (*c*.375–378), Epiphanius comments frequently on women's ritual activity as evidence and proof of the heresies he describes. Demonstrating a continuity with second-century opinions, he approvingly quotes Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* (*c*.175–185) to repeat the accusations that a certain Marcus gave mixed chalices to women for them to consecrate, and encouraged them to prophesy even if they had nothing to say, although his principal aim was their seduction! (*Pan*. III.2,2–8; cf. Irenaeus. *Haer*. 1.13–21). Among other scandalous behaviour, the Marcionites permitted women to baptize (*Pan*. III.42,4); the Phrygians (Montanists) have prophetesses (*Pan*. III.48); and the Quintillianists 'have women bishops, presbyters and the rest' as well as 'prophetesses' (*Pan*. III. 49.2,3).

The fourth century, though, presents us with two interesting accounts of autonomous women's ritualizing. The Canons of the Council of Gangra, a provincial council in Paphlagonia of 355, condemn the extreme asceticism of Eustathius of Sebaste and its impact on certain women (Barnes 1989: 124). In general, they are concerned about transvestism, but they also note that some ascetic women are going even further and forming their own religious assemblies:

> Moreover, they were found to be promoting withdrawal from the houses of God and the church, [and] disposed contemptuously against the church and the things [done] in the church, and have established their own assemblies, churches, different teachings, and other things in opposition to the churches and the things [done] in the church … They do not wish to make prayers in the homes of married persons and despise such prayers when they are made; frequently they do not participate in the oblations taking place in the very houses of married persons; they condemn married presbyters; they do not engage in the liturgies when performed by married presbyters. (Miller 2005: 151)

Epiphanius describes some women 'who came from Thrace and northern Scythia to Arabia', whom he calls the 'Collyridians' (those who offer cakes, *kollyrides*). These women are described as 'unstable, prone to error and mean-spirited' (*Pan*. 79,1.6) and their rituals in honour of the Virgin Mary are 'ridiculous' (*Pan*. 79,1.2): 'for certain women decorate a barber's chair or a square seat, spread a cloth on it, set out bread and offer it in Mary's name on a certain day of the year and all partake of the bread'. To refute this 'madness of women', Epiphanius appeals to the readers' 'manly frame of mind' (*Pan*. 79,1.7). Because, he argues with reference to scripture, women have never offered sacrifices to God, not even Mary was a priest nor did she baptize (*Pan*. 79,31–2); even if, in Acts, Philip's daughters prophesied, he is clear that they were not priests. He does offer a concession:

> [It is plain] too that there is an order of deaconesses in the church. But this is not allowed for the practice of priesthood or any liturgical function, but for the sake of feminine modesty, at either the time of baptism or of the examination of some condition or trouble, and when a women's body may be bared, so that she will not be seen by the male priests but by the assisting female who is appointed by the priest for the occasion, to take temporary care of the woman who needs it at the time when her body is uncovered. … For the same reason the word of God does not allow a woman 'to speak' in church, either, or 'bear rule over a man'. And there is a great deal that can be said about this. (*Pan*. 79,3,6; Williams 2013: 639)

Epiphanius' condemnation of the Collyridians' ritual is related to their gender: 'Every sect is a worthless woman, but this sect more so, which is composed of women and belongs to him who was the deceiver of the first woman' (*Pan*. 79,8.3; Williams 2013: 644). And, 'Whether these worthless women offer Mary the loaf as though in worship of her, or whether they mean to offer this rotten fruit on her behalf, it is altogether silly and heretical, and demon-inspired insolence and imposture' (*Pan*. 79,9.3; Williams 2013: 645).

Joan Taylor reminds us that Epiphanius admitted inventing the name Collyridians and that 'A name given by Epiphanius to a group does not imply that it was, necessarily, an organised body' (1990: 324). Is this a true story? Epiphanius says that he has been told about it but not actually witnessed it. Ross Shepherd Kraemer suggests that, 'By a historical principle known sometimes as the criterion of embarrassment (or sometimes of dissimilarity), we might consider such narratives probable. According to this

principle, writers are presumed to omit embarrassing or undesirable reports unless they themselves consider them true' (2004: 10). The account of a ritual bread-offering to Mary by women does not seem so far-fetched, even if we are not talking about an institutionalized cult.

Also from the fourth century is the most interesting anonymous (pseudo-Athanasian) *Discourse on Virginity*, in which there are extensive instructions for the organization of formal prayer among a community of virgins, including a prescribed form of private night prayer. The text has much to say about subordination to Christ, and interestingly this is to be ritually expressed when a holy man visits the community:

> If a saint should come to your home, receive him in such a way as the Son of God … If a just man should come into your house, you shall face him with fear and trembling, and you shall prostrate yourself on the ground at his feet. For you do not prostrate yourself to Him, but to God who sent him. You shall take water and wash his feet and you shall listen to his words with all reverence. (*Virg*. 22; Shaw 2000: 96)

The very same text, though, encourages the virgin to 'eucharisticize' the bread using formulae which can be found in episcopal Eucharistic prayers. She is instructed to do this whether alone or with other virgins but, following the custom in the assembly, never in front of a catechumen:

> And when you sit at table and start to break bread, while crossing yourself three times, [NB: Berger 2011: 89, asserts that the correct translation is that she makes the sign of the cross over the bread] giving thanks in this way, say: 'We give thanks to you our Father for your Holy resurrection, for through Jesus your Son you have made it known to us; and just as this bread, which is scattered, becomes one when it is gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom, for yours is the power and the glory unto ages of ages. Amen'. (*Virg*. 13; Shaw 2000: 91)

Again, after eating, she is to recite a prayer which is very similar to post-communion thanksgivings:

> We give thanks to you and praise you, because you consider us worthy to partake of your goods, of fleshly nourishment. We beg you and ask you, Lord, that you might give us heavenly nourishment as well, and grant that we might tremble at and fear your awesome and honourable name, and not disobey your commandments. May you store your law and your ordinances in our hearts, and sanctify our spirits, our souls, and our bodies through your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom to you be glory, honor and power unto the ages of ages. Amen. (*Virg*. 14; Shaw 2000: 92)

There are relatively frequent prohibitions on women baptizing and despite there being no concrete examples in the sources, one does wonder if it did, in fact, happen; one imagines by midwives for dying infants, rather than of adults. Not only is this considered improper (following 1 Cor.) but it is viewed as positively dangerous. Thus, *Didascalia*

15 warns, 'As to whether a woman may baptize, or whether one should be baptized by a woman, we do not counsel this, since it is a transgression of the commandment and a great danger to her who baptizes as to the one who is baptized' (Stewart-Sykes 2009: 189). And the *Apostolic Constitutions* augments the *Didascalia*, upon which it is based: 'And about a woman's baptizing, we are informing you that there is no small danger to the women who attempt it. Therefore we do not advise it. For it is dangerous, or rather, it is illegal and impious.' It continues by implying that baptism is a priestly task and states categorically that women cannot be priests, except as 'an error of Greek atheism' (*Const. ap*. 3.9; Miller 2005: 65–6). Methuen, who argues for situating the instructions of the *Didascalia* in a concrete historical situation in which a bishop sought to reassert his authority, has plausibly suggested that, 'The specific nature of the instructions that widows should not teach and that women should not baptise implies that the problem, at least in part, was that the widows had been carrying out the functions which the author wished to deny them' (1995: 200).

In many regions, but by no means all (exceptions are Palestine, Egypt, and North Africa), women deaconesses had authorized ritual functions during the baptism of women, but not of men. The *Didascalia*, Methuen has also argued, attempted to take power from widows and give it to the deaconesses who are to be 'honored by you as a type of Holy Spirit' (9.2; Stewart-Sykes 2009: 151). It permits deaconesses to anoint: 'it is required that when women go down into the waters that they should be anointed with the oil of anointing by deaconesses as they enter the water' (15.3; Stewart-Sykes 2009: 193). *Const. ap*. 3.16 adds that a deacon should anoint the forehead only of women candidates, and a deaconess the whole body, 'for it is not necessary that the women be observed by men' (Miller 2005: 64). However, such a concern for propriety was not evident everywhere: in Jerusalem, the newly baptized were reminded 'you were naked in the sight of all and were not ashamed' (Cyril, *Catech. myst*. 2.2). *Const. ap*. 8.19–20 provides a prayer for the public ordination of deaconesses and the *Barbarini Codex gr*. 336, the earliest liturgical manuscript for the city of Constantinople, attests to the ordination of deaconesses until the ninth century (*Barbarini* 336: 163).

Conclusion

When women were not barred by menstruation or childbirth, they were of course present in the liturgical assembly, but as Berger has pointed out 'no gender-free space exists in liturgical history' (2011: 65). What door women entered and exited by, where they were permitted to stand (on the left, at the back, or in a gallery), what, if anything, they were permitted to say (thus, *Virg*. 23: 'Keep silent in church, and do not laugh at all, but pay attention only to the reading' [Shaw 2005: 96]), when they were permitted to receive communion (after the men), where was their place in processions; for all these normal liturgical activities, baptized women were the subject of spatial regulations (see Berger 2011: 37–64). This means that although women were

present in some numbers in the liturgical assembly, their participation was not the same as the ideal congregant—male, baptized, of moral rectitude, and who had not recently had sex.

Victor Turner's notion of 'rites of passage' has been a useful way of examining how an individual acquires a new status in the community through a threefold process of separation, liminality, and *communitas*. The liminal phase requires an annihilation of self-identity, a reversal of social status, through physical and ritual separation, the experience of *communitas*, followed by the identity crisis which is resolved by (re-)admission to the community. Bynum has offered a critique of this based on her study of medieval women's lives revealed in hagiographies and autobiographies. She noted that when women wrote about themselves they did not consider their lives in this processual manner and that 'Turner's notion of liminality … is applicable only to men. Only men's stories are full social dramas; only men's symbols are full reversals' (1984: 118). Women are liminal to men, as Turner himself noted, and as we can see in the early Christian rituals presented in this section, they never fully achieve an equal and full status in the community.

For women qualified to be present at the Eucharist, we note some interesting practices related to the physical space and movement through the thresholds within it. Regular and cyclical exclusions because of menstruation or childbirth place women in a revolving door of separation, liminality, and incorporation. The almost-permanent liminal status of baptized non-menstruating midwives is asserted by positioning them with catechumens and penitents at the door of the church during the weeks after delivery (*Can. Hipp*. 18). Christian women not subject to these restrictions may still find themselves positioned at the *limens* of the liturgical assembly, expressed by being restricted to specific, inferior places in the church building. Thus, we should consider the women who do achieve incorporation—the consecrated widows positioned next to the presbyters in the sanctuary, the virgins at their veiling—to be exceptional cases. The hesitations about the universal applicability of 'rites of passage' theories to baptism voiced by Bradshaw in this volume (Chapter 30), become even more clearly articulated when one considers that, despite having been baptized, women might repeatedly experience separation and liminality, and only temporary incorporation.

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CHAPTER 38

FASTING AS AN ASCETIC RITUAL

RICHARD FINN, OP

Posing the Questions

The Acts of the Apostles relates in most extant manuscripts how the Holy Spirit instructed a small group of prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch while they were 'worshipping the Lord and fasting' that Barnabas and Saul were to be consecrated for 'the work to which I have called them'. When they had 'fasted and prayed', they then 'laid hands on them and sent them off' (Acts 13:1–3). The verses raise a number of questions for the historian about ritual, several of which concern the role of fasting in early Christian ritual or rites, where these are understood primarily as ceremonies in which the customary words and actions carry religious or other significance. Whatever the episode might say about the Antiochene church of the mid-first century, does the episode indicate for the author or initial readers of Acts (in probably the late first and early second century) that some form of fasting, whether by groups or individuals, was a ritualizing element in prayer for divine guidance? If so, should we think of fasting in this context as an element in the ritual, or as the condition for the ritual's success in pleading for an authoritative revelation? Does it further indicate that fasting was a constitutive ritual in the consecration of individuals for a specific ministry or ministries? Yet, we have also to ask what counts as fasting in this context. To address this question is to do more than identify a specific dietary regimen; it is to move beyond a definition of ritual as ceremony to consider ritual as stylized or formalized conduct that brings new significance to particular activities. But in what way does something need to be stylized for it to count as ritual?

It is now generally recognized that many early Christians from the first century onwards regularly engaged in different kinds of asceticism: they abstained for a time or permanently from certain foods, wine, and sexual activity; they refrained from sleep, as well as renouncing wealth or private property. They did so as part of their Christian worship of God outside the common liturgies which have long claimed attention as the major forms of Christian ritual. Clearly, not all such asceticism took the form of

rituals: permanent abstention from wine or meat, for example, could not be ritualized in this way, though it may have led in some cases to distinctive rituals where the Eucharist was celebrated with water in place of the wine in an unknown number of churches (while Eucharists celebrated with water are notable in the apocryphal *acta*, their frequency outside such literature is difficult to assess, see McGowan 1999 and Finn 2009: 76–80). Nor was permanent sexual renunciation itself open to direct ritualization, though entry into this state might be marked by solemn ritual, as when Ambrose's sister Marcellina was veiled as a consecrated virgin at Rome (see his *Virg*. III.1). Little attention, however, has yet been given to the ritual dimension of much Early Christian asceticism, how ascetic practices served as component elements in larger or more complex rituals and ways of life, or how the ritual (stylized and formal) aspect of certain ascetic activities entered into their meaning and function for individuals and churches. This chapter seeks to explore these two ritual dimensions of asceticism by focusing on one practice, that of fasting, in two different periods: the first part of the chapter seeks to interpret the evidence of Acts 13:1–3 and its relevance for ascetic rituals in the second century; the second part turns to the fifth-century career of St Simeon Stylites the Elder. As we shall see, however, our initial questions may lead to further questions rather than to easy answers.

Interpreting Acts

The questions raised above about the liturgies described in Acts 13:1–3 are not easily answered for several reasons. Some manuscripts which are considered evidence for the 'Western Tradition' (the form in which the Scriptures were often disseminated in the Latin West), omit mention of fasting during the initial act of worship in which the Spirit inspired the choice of Barnabas and Saul (though *Codex Bezae* [D], often held to be the tradition's principal witness, includes fasting at this point). Some scholars see only one act of liturgical prayer and fasting where others see two. Thus, Joseph Fitzmyer translated verse 3 as follows: 'Then, having completed their fasting and prayer, they laid hands on them and sent them off' (Fitzmyer 1998: 494). In favour of this reading it may be noted that when the apostles commissioned Stephen and six others to oversee the distribution of food to needy widows (Acts 6: 6), it is simply stated that they 'prayed and laid hands on them'. Fasting in this reading is limited to readying the faithful to receive a revelation. Ernst Haenchen, by contrast, has argued that the episode comprises two scenes, the second 'separated from the first by a lapse of time: a new period of preparation through fasting and prayer' before the laying on of hands (Haenchen 1971: 396). It seems that John Chrysostom likewise saw the reference to fasting as tied to ordination as well as revelation: 'When they had to lay on hands, then they fasted. The Spirit spoke to them as they were fasting' (*Hom. Act*. 27.2, PG 60, 205). However, a critical text of Chrysostom's fifty-five *Homilies on Acts* has yet to be published (Gignac 1998: 209–25). I. Howard Marshall has also seen two distinct sessions 'of prayer and fasting' but asserted that the second is a 'period of intercession' for the missionaries'

'future work' distinct from their commissioning (1980: 216). What might lead us to prefer one of these readings with their different assumptions about the role of fasting for early Christians?

The Context in Acts

Episodes elsewhere in Acts strongly link prayer with abstaining from food before receiving a revelation. Cornelius receives a vision after fasting until the ninth hour (10:30), which might, but need not, suggest a ritual context for his fast, while Peter received a vision at Joppa after going onto the roof to pray at the sixth hour, where he grew hungry and fell into a trance while his meal was still being prepared (10:9–16). His fasting is clearly involuntary and non-ritualized. Much later, St Paul is portrayed on board a ship in a violent storm lasting many days during which he received a vision of an angel after there had been 'a great deal of non-eating', presumably on the part of all aboard through loss of appetite in the heavy swell (27:21). It would seem that in Acts going without food provides the ideal conditions for revelation, whether or not the abstention is ritualized. The parallels tell in favour of fasting as integral to the first act of worship described in Acts 13:1–3.

Acts further describes how Barnabas and Saul in the course of their missionary journeys 'when they had appointed elders for [the disciples] in every church, with prayer and fasting … committed them to the Lord in whom they believed' (Acts 14:23 RSV). Here a repeated pattern of action in each church clearly suggests a ritual of some kind. Scholars note that St Paul's undisputed letters make no mention of his appointing elders, and plausibly suggest that the author of Acts has here retrojected into this founding mission the conventional or expected practice of his own day. If so, should we ask *who* fasts and *when* in this practice? Is it only the missionaries, or do the newly appointed elders and even the whole church join with them? Does the prayer with fasting belong only to a committal ritual distinct from the elders' appointment? Are those being committed to the Lord the new elders or the wider group of Christians whom these will serve? John Chrysostom apparently glossed this passage with the exclamation: 'Look! The laying on of hands with fasting. Fasting once again, the cleansing of our hearts' (*Hom. Act*. 31.2, PG 60, 229). A much later commentator on Acts 13 and 14 simply asserted: 'Le jeûne et la prière liturgique ont de tout temps accompagné l'ordination aux ordres sacrés' [Fasting and liturgical prayer have always accompanied ordination to holy orders] (Dockx 1976: 245). Yet, what further evidence for early Christian practice would confirm this claim? The author of Acts may have included an unspecified fast simply to assure readers that the elders are chosen and commissioned with all due authority, where that fast is not in fact based upon any equivalent rite of ordination known to the readers. What matters on this view is that religious fasting can function within the text as the guarantor of divinely sanctioned change. Ritual here negotiates the successful transition between the old and new orders. This literary function should depend upon the ritual having a similar function outside the text, in other texts, or in Christian life, but not necessarily in

the ordination of ministers. In assessing these matters, we must now turn to other early Christians texts.

The Wider Context: *The Shepherd*

Some insight can be gained from another literary work which circulated in the early second century. In *The Shepherd*, which was probably composed at Rome in several stages sometime between the late first century and the mid-second century, a married freedman named Hermas narrates a series of visions which he received. One contained a puzzling text which he transcribed but was unable to read. He only comes to understand it after a fifteen-day fast (Herm., *Vis*. II, 2.1). To his grief, later visions also outstrip his ability to understand them, and his search for their meaning becomes itself a subject of the visions. Some are explained to him by an old woman sitting in a chair who is a figure of the Church, and whom he later sees first standing upright in middle age, and then on the third occasion as a beautiful young woman. When he asks for the meaning of her transformation, she tells him that 'every enquiry needs humility. Fast therefore, and you will receive what you ask from the Lord.' When Hermas acts on her advice, a young man appears one day later who initially warns him against being over-curious in these matters in case he damages his body, but whom Hermas then persuades to explain what he has witnessed (Herm., *Vis*. III, 10.6–13.4). *The Shepherd* confirms the potential association of fasting with prophetic revelation and interpretation.

What *The Shepherd* portrays at this point is not ritual fasting in the sense of fasting articulated in a given rite or ceremony (sitting down, say, at an empty table), nor is it necessarily ritual in the sense of stylized activity (there being no action to stylize). It may merely be fasting for a given purpose and with a certain meaning. This returns us to the issue of what counts as ritual. Some might argue that not doing something can never be a ritual in itself, precisely because nothing is performed or takes place, though the inaction might be a component part in a larger ritual, like the silence observed as part of the ceremonies at the cenotaph on Remembrance Day in London. Christoph Wulf claims that '[r]itual actions are created by the movements of the body' while '[r]itual praxis requires bodily movement, by which proximity and distance among the ritual's participants can be theatrically realized' (Wulf 2006: 400–1). Others, though, may reasonably hold that the demarcation of a given abstention by specific contexts, times or places properly amounts to a ritualization of the abstention. The nation is invited to observe the custom or ritual of a two minutes' silence, though this may be more or less ritually demarcated or ritualized by the firing of a cannon at the close. We shall look at several highly ritualized demarcations of fasting in the second half of this chapter. Ronald Grimes has listed some eleven 'family characteristics of ritual' (or ways by which actions may become ritualized): the 'prescribing their details so that they are performed in the proper way', 'entering them with a non-ordinary attitude or in a special state of mind, for example, contemplatively or in trance', and 'attributing to them special power or influence' (2014: 194).

According to this perspective, Hermas' reported fast before he receives a revelation looks to be lightly ritualized: it is entered upon in a given state of mind, but its duration varies sharply from one day to fifteen; nor is the fasting localized by the text or otherwise demarcated than by the successful reception of a vision. This differs from what we see later of how Hermas keeps a 'station' (a regular prayer vigil) during which he fasts, and which other early texts suggest was a twice-weekly ritualized fast also observed in Carthage and elsewhere on a Wednesday and Friday until the ninth hour by some, and for longer by members of the New Prophecy Movement (Herm., *Sim*. V,1; Tertullian, *Jejun*. 10). This station itself becomes the setting for a revelation early one morning when the Shepherd appears to Hermas and criticizes this ritual unless it is accompanied by observance of the Lord's commands. The Shepherd sanctions the station only when the person fasting, together with his or her children and household, abstains from all but bread and water for the day and when he or she gives in alms to the poor the money which would otherwise have been spent on food (Herm., *Sim*. V, 1–3).

Articulating Religious Humility

Yet, Hermas' non-ritual or less ritualized fasts may still be partly dependent on more fully ritualized fasting within the believing community for their meaning. The significance of Hermas' varying fasts as expressive of humility presumably derives from the Judaeo-Christian tradition in which not eating when or what one would otherwise eat was the accepted symbol of humility. The Septuagint Scripture related how Israel was commanded to 'humble itself' on the Day of Atonement, which was universally understood as the command to fast (Lev. 16:29, 31; 23:27; Num. 29:7). Although this ritual fast may not have been universally observed, widespread observance would have interacted with this and other Scriptural texts which linked fasting with humility to secure this meaning for their readers, which was then carried across into early Christian stations. Unlike what we saw in Acts, however, the stations do not show this more ritualized fasting as accompanying any kind of transition. In the Didache, a very early 'church-order' or description of how to organize certain aspects of church life and liturgy, this twice-weekly fast on Wednesdays and Fridays is contrasted with the fast held by the 'hypocrites' on Mondays and Thursdays (Did. 8). Stational fasts from this perspective asserted the boundary of the specifically Christian community over and against non-Christian neighbours.

To complicate matters further, Hermas does not always specify what form of abstention counts as fasting, whether he ate and drank nothing, or whether he drank only water and ate nothing but bread, and whether a one-day fast lasted only until the ninth hour. Here, as in Acts, his silence probably betokens some acceptance among the intended readership as to roughly what counts as religious 'fasting' in the first place, such that it is already a conventional pattern of abstention which might amount to a ritualized praxis of sorts. On the other hand, we have also seen how in two different places the text contests what counts as acceptable fasting. How are we to understand the young

man's warning to Hermas not to be over-curious lest he injure his health through too much fasting? How are we to understand the Shepherd's criticism of fasting which permits more to be consumed during the day than bread and water or which is not accompanied by almsgiving?

There are very few accounts in early Christian texts which indicate how ordinary believers experienced their ascetic practices. *The Shepherd* probably reflects in this way an anxiety and debate within the churches about the proper limits of religious fasting, whether because they are partially undetermined, or determined but in conflict either with individual practice (such as Hermas' own) or with the norms of the dominant Graeco-Roman culture. In this respect it is relevant that *The Shepherd* strongly promotes the virtue of 'simplicity' or 'single-mindedness' (*haplotes*) over the vice of being 'double-minded' (*dipsychia*). The double-minded are overly swayed by the values of the surrounding culture. Taken together with Hermas' persuasion of the young man to explain the meaning of what he has seen, this suggests a tension between broadly accepted social norms which limit and define fasting as a religious ritual within the churches for whom *The Shepherd* is written and the text's defence of more rigorous practices to be undertaken by certain prophets or by Christians generally in observing the stations.

More Evidence from Church Orders

If *The Shepherd* affirms the likely role of fasting in ritually preparing oneself to receive and interpret a vision in the early second century, other evidence associates fasting with the laying on of hands, not in ordination rituals but in baptism and healing rituals. The Didache, which is generally held to contain very early instructions on how to treat different ministers, exhorts its readers to choose 'bishops' and 'deacons' who are to fulfil the office in the local church of visiting prophets and teachers, but it says nothing of any ritual by which they are to be appointed (Did. 15). By contrast, it stipulates that candidates for baptism are to fast for one or two days beforehand, while the minster performing the baptism is likewise to fast for an unspecified period, as are others who are able to do so (Did. 7).

A similar contrast is to be found in a later church order, *The Apostolic Tradition*. The different extant versions make various provisions for the ordination of bishops, priests, and deacons, but make no mention of preparatory fasting (*Trad. ap*. 2.1–5, 7.1–5, 8.1–12; Bradshaw, Johnson and Philips 2002: 24, 56, 60–2). Yet, the Sahidic, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions all stipulate a fast by the catechumens preparing for baptism on the Friday immediately preceding their exorcism through the laying on of hands and insufflation (*Trad. ap*. 20.7–8; Bradshaw, Johnson, and Philips 2002: 106). It is not possible to ascertain exactly when and where the account of this practice entered the *Apostolic Tradition* considered as 'an aggregation of materials from different sources, quite possibly arising from different geographical regions, and probably from different historical periods' between the mid-second and the mid-fourth century. However, absence of any explicit indication that baptism takes place at Easter, has been thought suggestive

of an early date (Bradshaw, Johnson, and Philips 2002: 24). In the late-fourth-century *Apostolic Constitutions* the candidate for baptism also fasts at an unspecified point beforehand (*Const. ap*. VII.22). While not simple windows on early practice, the wide circulation of these texts suggests that most catechumens fasted or were meant to fast in ritual preparation for baptism.

How did such ritual fasting function? John Chrysostom, addressing the newly baptized, told them that their corporal Lenten fasting prepared them for the more important spiritual abstinence from sin, for 'this is the fasting which helps us, and it is with this fasting in view that we abstain from food, so that we may more easily run in the course of virtue' (*Catech*. 5.1, Harkins 1963: 80). While such fasting manifestly gave the fourth-century bishop a peg after the event on which to promote temperance, its actual or more important function may have been to bond the catechumens closely to the community they were about to enter, since a Friday fast was widely observed by devout Christians from an early period (as already noted). When catechumens fasted ritually for perhaps the first time, the practice also marked the liminality of their state, and heightened expectation. The experience of physical hunger which resulted from not eating their 'fill' may have prepared them psychologically for the subsequent reception of the Spirit as an indwelling presence (Bradshaw, Johnson, and Philips 2002: 106). As in Acts, ritual fasting facilitates the movement from an old to a new order, from one status to another through becoming open to the power of God. Gavin Flood has argued that '[t]he ascetic submits her life to a form that transforms it, to a training that changes a person's orientation from the fulfilment of desire to a narrative greater than the self' (Flood 2004: 2). That may mislead if we imagine that early Christian ascetic practices were always constitutive of professional 'ascetics', but captures well the role of ritual fasts in this context to incorporate new members into the church and its master narrative.

The *Didascalia Apostolorum,* a church order which may well derive in its present form from the work of an early-third century compiler or editor (Stewart-Sykes 2009: 50), seeks in one section to regulate the practice of widows who attended the sick, who may have fasted with them, and who laid hands upon them. They are instructed not to act independently of the bishop, and in particular not to minister in this way to individuals who are in some sense excommunicate as known sinners or who are outside the boundaries of the church as those are perceived by the author (*Did. apost*. 15.iii.8). One difficulty here is to know whether we are dealing with discrete actions in a list, or a ritual sequence of actions, where fasting is preparatory to the imposition of hands. Nonetheless, we might speculate that the widows and their patients understood their shared fasting as preparing them to act as humble channels and recipients respectively of divine healing through the laying on of hands. And we might further speculate that the clerical author or editor who sought to limit such activity to *bona fide* church members recognized the power of this ascetic ritual to strengthen corporate identity.

To summarize the first part of this article, Acts 13 and 14 cannot be taken without further supporting evidence to indicate a role for fasting in early ordination rites, but do indicate the place of ritual fasting in receiving revelation by the late first century, in solemnizing major transitions within the lives of individual Christians and their churches,

and perhaps in healing rituals, where what runs through these different roles is the power of ascetic fasting to orientate practitioners towards the divine. Furthermore, *The Shepherd* and *Didascalia* indicate that while there was some agreement as to what counted as proper religious fasting in the second century, its extent and form were also a source of anxiety and dispute. If some ritual forms of fasting marked social transitions, other forms contributed to the affirmation of a continuing Christian identity. Religious fasting might be non-ritual, lightly or more heavily ritualized, but its significance appears anchored in its more ritualized forms.

Ritualized Ascetic Performance: St Simeon Stylites

The changing role which communal fasting was meant to play for early Christians in the construction of a penitential season of prayer before Easter has been well documented (Johnson 1999). Where Christians in the second and early third centuries often observed a two-day fast before Easter, by the fourth century, Christian writers promoted ever longer periods of mitigated abstention. There was much regional variation. Between the mid-third and mid-fourth century, Roman Christians apparently observed a three-week fast (Chavasse 1952: 84). T. D. Barnes noted that while some of Athanasius' *Festal Letters* prescribed a six-day fast before Easter in Egypt, others stipulated a forty-day fast of some kind, and that this provides a clue to the latter's later date (Barnes 1986: 583). David Brakke has observed how Athanasius encouraged his readers to practise sexual abstinence at the same time, so that one form of self-discipline reinforced the other (Brakke 1995: 184). What is to be explored in the second half of this chapter is how these and other communal observances formed a dramatic backdrop in which the holy man might practise a far stricter fast in a series of ritualized performances for vast audiences.

In the first half of the fifth century, St Simeon Stylites acquired lasting renown for the long years which he spent standing in prayer exposed to the elements on a mountain top near the eastern border of the Roman empire. The three principal sources which celebrated him as a holy man are: (1) an account in Theodoret of Cyrrhus's *Hist. Rel.*, XXVI, written during the Stylite's lifetime; (2) a Greek *Life* partly dependent on Theodoret and written probably soon after Simeon's death in *c.*459; (3) a Syriac *Life* also written soon after 459, but independently of the Greek text (Doran and Ashbrook Harvey 1992—hereafter *LSS*). These *Lives* offer a fascinating contrast between the hostile reception which greeted his extreme but ascetic practices as a young coenobitic monk and the reputation for sanctity which he acquired as an apparently solitary ascetic around whom others gravitated in huge numbers. The contrast is of particular interest here because while the young monk and the older ascetic observed much the same practices or abstentions, these were largely non-ritual or lightly ritualized in the monastic setting, but highly and differently ritualized in his career as a supposedly solitary ascetic.

Hostility towards the Coenobitic Youth

According to Theodoret, Simeon as a young monk fasted for a week at a time where other monks kept only a two-day fast. He bound a rope of palm leaves round his waist so tightly that it lacerated his skin, and he kept the rope in place for some ten days before its discovery by his fellow monks forced him to remove it (*Hist. Rel.* XXVI.5). This and other acts of extreme self-denial led to his banishment from the monastery, whereupon he confined himself in a cistern. In the Greek *Life*, the other monks fast daily until sundown whereas Simeon secretly extends his fast to a week by giving away his daily rations to the poor. The ten days during which he wore the rope here stretch to a year, and his flesh has been so damaged by the rope at the year's end that his body must be soaked in warm water before his clothing can be prised away to reveal the rotting flesh and the worms infesting it. Two doctors are required to assist in removing the rope (*Greek Life*, 5–6, 8, *LSS*, 89–90). Once recuperated, the young monk is dismissed from the community, and secludes himself in a well (*Greek Life* 9, *LSS*, 90–1). In the Syriac text, the young Simeon fasts regularly for a week and sometimes for up to three weeks; he digs a hole in which to hide himself. As in the other sources, Simeon wounds himself with the rope. Though the abbot recognizes his holiness, his fellow monks are hostile and ensure his dismissal (*Syriac Life* 16, 18, 21, 25; *LSS*, 112–16). In these sources a secretive personal asceticism which is largely non-ritualized, and which dramatically exceeds the conventional (and to this extent ritualized) asceticism of the monastic community, causes dissension and eventually results in the individual's expulsion.

How might we assess this part of Simeon's biographies? In terms of the texts' rhetorical structure and hagiographical purpose, rejection by his fellow monks exalts the status of the heroic protagonist. Their mediocrity contributes by contrast to the construction of his growing sanctity. To the extent that the narratives reflect an underlying history, we may be tempted to judge the monks' reactions in moral or psychological categories as indicative of envy or lacking in zeal and charity. However, from the perspective of ritual studies, where some agreed form of fasting is one element in the ritual definition of religious life under an abbot or *higoumen* (together with vigils, psalmody, and perhaps manual labour), Simeon's non-ritual but more extreme practice may have undermined the religious authority of the master who had to define each element in the life and initiate new members into the community's rhythmic *praxis*. Simeon's idiorhythmic practice necessarily challenged the ascetic identity of the group (on monastic *paideia*, see Torrance 2012: 125–7).

Sanctity in the Older Solitary

The sources proceed to detail the yet harsher self-denial which Simeon practises as a solitary, but which is highly and distinctively ritualized. In its new setting this asceticism wins him both renown and spiritual power, whether to end droughts, heal the paralysed,

or sway the mighty in favour of the poor (*Syriac Life* 74, 78, 122–3; *LSS*, 155, 160, 190–1). We are repeatedly presented with carefully staged dramas of self-confinement by the ascetic which serve as the primary setting for prayer and fasting, though these actions may then be further ritualized. Theodoret tells how the saint shut himself for three years into a small hut. He was likewise sealed into the hut to spend forty days without food or drink. He is found 'prostrate, breathless, unable to speak or move' (*Hist. Rel.* XXVI.7 in *LSS*, 70). For the next twenty-eight years Simeon confines himself permanently within an enclosure. Where before he had hidden himself below ground, he now makes himself more easily visible to pilgrims by having part of the enclosure wall dismantled and by standing upon a series of ever higher pillars, a development the novelty of which is noted by his biographers (*Hist. Rel.* XXVI.12, in *LSS*, 76). By standing still, the saint resists sleep at night and gives visible expression to a mind fixed on God (*Hist. Rel.* XXVI.24, in *LSS*, 82). He denies himself the comfort of woven clothes to wear only animal skins (*Hist. Rel.* XXVI.12, in *LSS*, 75. See also *Syriac Life* 114, in *LSS*, 184). He makes long series of prostrations. Each Lent his raised stage becomes the setting for a total fast of forty days. For the rest of the year he eats just once a week. A malignant ulcer breaks out on his left foot (*Hist. Rel.* XXVI.9–10, 12, 22–3 in *LSS*, 73–74, 75, 81). Theodoret also indicates the saint's varied ministry as a result of his asceticism: he teaches and converts pagans to Christianity, heals, reconciles warring parties, and acts as a prophet in foreseeing drought, a plague of locusts, or other disasters (*Hist. Rel.* XXVI.15, 19, 26 in *LSS*, 78–80, 82–3).

In the Greek *Life* Simeon similarly remains four years within a walled enclosure open to the elements and in which he eats only soaked lentils and drinks water. Then he takes to the first of several pillars, each taller than the last, while the crowds build two further encircling walls. Worms drop from his ulcerated foot (*Greek Life* 12, 17–18 in *LSS*, 92–95). While the Greek version is silent as to the saint's Lenten practices, we are told that he spent every Friday totally given over to prayer, whereas on Saturdays and Sundays he would customarily raise his head to bless the crowds of kneeling pilgrims (*Greek Life* 28, in *LSS*, 97).

The Syriac *Life* has more to say about the saint's Lenten practices, both as a young man and as the increasingly famous stylite. Immediately before entry into his first monastery, Simeon abstains totally from all food during Lent, an observance broken only at the midpoint by reception of the Eucharist (*Syriac Life* 10, in *LSS*, 110). After leaving the first community and entering a second monastery populated by just one old man and a lad aged 7, Simeon is immured for Lent with six loaves and a jug of water which are found to be untouched on his emergence at Easter. The following year he is again confined for the whole of Lent (*Syriac Life* 27–9, in *LSS*, 118). During his period as a stylite we hear how the door to his enclosure is shut at the beginning of Lent to prevent pilgrims from approaching before Easter (*Syriac Life* 51, in *LSS*, 133).

The sources differ in several respects as to the details of Simeon's monastic life and his later ritualized asceticism (how long he spent in the monastery at Teleda, or the number and height of the columns on which he stood), and cannot be taken as historically accurate in all respects. Nonetheless, they agree on the different means by which Simeon's ascetic practices were ritualized. How did these different forms of ritualization

contribute to the construction of the ascetic's spiritual authority? Monks and clerics who might otherwise regard the holy man as a rival to their own status are co-opted as assistants and authoritative witnesses to the saint's extraordinary feats. Someone other than the saint must seal and later break open the doors. It was seemingly the bishop of Antioch no less who gave communion to the ascetic at Easter (*Syriac Life* 54, in *LSS*, 135). There were attendants who marshalled the crowds, provided what little Simeon consumed, and who presumably removed his urine and faeces. According to the Syriac work there were two close attendants, one of whom regularly spent the night on a ladder beside the pillar (*Syriac Life* 53, in *LSS*, 134).

Adoption of animal skins in place of woven clothing was held as an ideal by some Syrian writers on the ascetic life. The late-fourth- or early-fifth century *Book of Steps* laments that contemporaries wore fine clothes whereas 'our predecessors wore the skins of goats and hideous sackcloth' (*Book of Steps*, XXIX.3, trans. Kitchen and Parmentier 2004: 325). Perhaps a century later a *History* traditionally attributed to Faustus (or P'awstos) of Byzantium described Armenian solitaries of the mid-fourth century in terms borrowed from Hebrews 11:37–8: they '"wandered about" like wild beasts "in the mountains covered with skins, hides, and goat-skins …"' (*History of Armenia*, VI.16; Garsoian 1989: 239). It is difficult to know how far the literary topos was matched by any common practice, but Simeon both associated himself with the ideal and differentiated himself from the cenobitic monks and the visiting pilgrims.

The pillars and enclosures gave external symbolic form to Simeon's self-restraint, his standing still in prayer, and the closure of his body to ordinary human nourishment. The enclosures structured the visitors' encounter with the holy man into several stages, and kept women at a greater distance than men, from where they could not see the saint (Theodoret, *Hist. Rel.* XXVI.21, in *LSS*, 81). Simeon's sexual renunciation thus also gained a form of external recognition. These ritualizing features of Simeon's practice may be thought of as creating spatially and socially a field of shared meaning. They validate the meaning of his practices for the pilgrims who enter this field even as they communicate that meaning. They made the saint both more and less accessible, poised between heaven and earth, a visible focus of attention for the male pilgrim within hailing distance, close enough to preach twice daily, but raised up to heaven as the pilgrim's intercessor (XXVI.25, in *LSS*, 82). Simeon's observance of Lent could be seen as acting in solidarity with the wider Church, but the manner of his observance also set him apart from fellow Christians.

Anthropology may further illuminate the relationship between Simeon's bodily self-restraint and his remote position between heaven and earth. Erika Summers Effler has suggested on the basis of a comparative study of two modern American movements (a Catholic Worker House and a group campaigning against the death penalty) that

> the farther a group is from success, the more local the focus. The closer a group is to perceived success, the more distant the focus. In other words, the more radical the goal, the more likely a group will be focused on the political implications of their

> personal lifestyle decisions. The more mundane their goal, the more likely they will view their personal interactions as a means to an end. (Summers-Effler 2010: 114)

From this perspective the ascetic's extreme bodily self-denial becomes central for those whose far distant goal is the kingdom of God. The saint's body is both local and pointing towards heaven. His immediate endurance maintains hope for the yet distant Parousia. Gavin Flood has asked whether asceticism may 'be understood not only as voluntary discipline but as acceptance of suffering seen as divine gift' (Flood 2004: xi). For St Simeon and his devotees, the answer is 'yes'.

Ritualization through the construction of pillars and enclosures together with the buildings which housed the saint's entourage created a monumental complex which rivalled the pagan temples as a religious centre. David Frankfurter has pointed to the evidence in Lucian for pillars at Hierapolis on which individual devotees took up residence for seven days twice each year in sleepless prayer to the gods for their blessings (1990: 169–70). The Christian saint outstripped the pagan by his permanent residence. At Hierapolis, the climber took clothes and other items to protect him from the elements, but Simeon's endurance in suffering was a revelation of divine power in human weakness, a sign of hope for the many pilgrims who were themselves struggling with a harsh environment and ruling elites. Indeed, the complex also resembled to some extent a martyr's shrine, so that ritualization made for a living martyr. Certainly, the church which was built after Simeon's death at Qa'lat Sim'an to enshrine the pillar at its heart has been described as 'a cruciform martyrion with an octagonal centre' (Ashbrook Harvey 1988: 377). It is notable in this respect that in the Syriac *Life* Simeon repeatedly responds to pilgrims' petitions with the gift of oil and dust from the shrine which is to be ritually used in healing the sick or protecting a ship by making the sign of the cross on its mast (*Syriac Life*, 33–5, 71, 72, 88 in *LSS*, 122–3, 151–3, 167). At the shrine of St Felix at Nola, oil could be poured into the confessor's tomb and then bottled for later use against illness (Paulinus, *Car*. XVIII.38–9). These rituals are in keeping with the wider use of dust and oil by pilgrims at martyrs' shrines in the early fifth century, and they presumably reflect in part the pilgrims' expectations and desires in approaching the stylite, but the spatial ritualization of ascetic practices may also be thought to facilitate the belief that these further rituals would mediate the living saint's power. As Paul Töbelmann has noted, 'There is no such thing as a singular ritual. It cannot be stressed enough that individual ritual acts are part of the ritual sphere as a whole' where 'rituals also interpret, reinterpret, and otherwise influence each other' (2010: 108).

It should also be noted what the different forms of ritualization discussed above do *not* do either singly or as a totality. Unlike Theodoret's text, they do not assist the pilgrim to understand the holy man as a philosopher. To some extent they confirm the literary presentation of Simeon in the Syriac *Life* as an Old Testament prophet or *alter Christus,* where the link between fasting and reception of a revelation is in continuity with the practice indicated by *The Shepherd* some three hundred years earlier. Some forms of ritualization, in particular, the dramatization of Simeon's Lenten fasting, perhaps assisted the pilgrim to see Simeon as an exemplary penitent, which is how he is primarily

portrayed in the Greek *Life* (for these literary representations, see Ashbrook Harvey 1988: 379–87). Yet, not all ritualization works to this end. The historian depends on hagiography for evidence, but in promoting a given theological understanding among its readers, hagiography interprets too narrowly for the historian the phenomena which it relates.

Conclusion

There is much else that could be examined about the ritual aspect of early Christian fasting. What has been set out here shows how frequently and variedly this central ascetic practice was either ritualized itself or contributed to larger Christian rituals in different periods between the second and fifth century. It sacralized the inspired choice of ministers, readied individuals for divine revelation, prepared ministers and catechumens for the rite of baptism, and consolidated the Christian community in twice-weekly stations and Lenten discipline. Distinctively ritualized, fasting constructed the spiritual authority of the ascetic holy man in collaboration with others, so that the wider Church and society could benefit from his intercession and the revelations which he received. This at least suggests the need to examine the relationship of ritual to other ascetic practices including, for example, the renunciation of wealth in ritualized almsgiving, where early Christians not only responded to beggars in the street, but contributed to an alms box at church each Sunday, or might organize the ceremonial distribution of alms to the poor in a public venue. Where scholarship has previously centred upon the role of texts in shaping and promoting the meaning of Christian almsgiving, it may be appropriate to ask as well how ritual reinforced or modulated these meanings for respective participants and their audiences. Peter Brown has noted of Late Antiquity: 'Ritual practices that combined almsgiving with intense prayer on behalf of fellow Christians (whether living or dead) played an even more central role in maintaining solidarity among Christians than did charity to the poor alone' (2015: 35). The future study of ritual in early Christian asceticism has much to recommend it, and much to consider.

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CHAPTER 39

THE CULT OF SAINTS

DAVID L. EASTMAN

Introduction

Veneration of holy people was a significant feature of early Christian piety. Through a collection of ritualized practices, Christians both received traditions handed down to them and contributed to the expansion of the image of the saints. Thus, ritual was a central factor in the creation of the cult of the saints. This chapter will focus on three of these practices: (1) the telling of stories; (2) pilgrimage; and (3) relic veneration. It will then consider the impact of the cult of the saints in the development of early Christianity.

The concept of cult in the ancient period differs greatly from contemporary use of the word. Taken from the Latin *cultus*, the term referred broadly to veneration or worship and lacked the notions of exclusivity that can accompany modern use. While this term was less exclusive in antiquity, the term saint was actually more narrowly defined than it is in modern parlance. A *sanctus/sancta* was a person considered holy because he/she had lived an extraordinary life, and the term was reserved primarily for martyrs. Martyr comes from the Greek noun *martūs*, of which the basic meeting is 'witness'. This term was used in legal contexts, but in early Christian usage it took on the more specific sense of referring to someone who had been killed for the faith. By imitating the suffering and death of Christ, a martyr had borne 'witness' to his/her faith and therefore was worthy of special recognition and honour from other Christians. Initially this veneration was limited and localized; however, over time, the scope of the cult of the saints expanded, particularly after the legalization of Christianity by the Emperor Constantine.

Stories

A fundamental component of any cult was the telling of the saint's foundation story. Such stories, some of which are included among the so-called apocryphal acts of the

apostles, explained the qualifications of the saint for special veneration and typically focused on the person's martyrdom. The stories were read aloud at the shrine or other veneration site of the martyr on particular days, especially on the martyr's birthday—the feast day commemorating the martyrdom itself, when the martyr was borne into heavenly existence. One of our earliest martyrdom stories, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, demonstrates this dynamic of recitation in a liturgical setting. This text narrates the trial, execution, and cremation of the 86-year-old Bishop of Smyrna in Asia Minor, probably some time between 155–170 CE. Near the end of the text, the anonymous author states that the Christians of Smyrna collected the bones of their bishop and laid them in 'a suitable place'. Then the author expresses a desire for Christians to continue gathering at the site of Polycarp's burial on the anniversary of his martyrdom. This communal assembly focuses on the commemoration of Polycarp and others like him who died for their faith, but it also functions as encouragement and preparation for those who in the future might face trial and martyrdom (*Mart. Pol.* 18.2–3). This annual celebration of Polycarp and others is ritualized through its annual occurrence on a set date in a particular place. The textual account of the bishop's death was no doubt read at the annual assembly as a means of maintaining Polycarp's authority, establishing it for the first time for new members of the community, and highlighting his example of faithfulness.

The pilgrim Egeria took part in similar recitations at several shrines during her pilgrimage from Spain or southern France to the eastern Mediterranean in the later fourth century.[1] In her *Itinerary*, she recounts her visit to the shrine of the Apostle Thomas in Edessa:

> When we had come [to Edessa], we immediately proceeded to the church and the martyr shrine of saint Thomas. Then, according to custom, prayers were made and other things that were customary in the holy places were done. Also, we read there a number of things by saint Thomas himself' (*It. Eg.* 19.2; all translations are author's unless otherwise noted).

These readings probably included the Acts of Thomas, an account of the apostle's alleged missionary journey as far east as India. *The Book of Thomas: The Contender Writing to the Perfect*, which probably originated in Edessa, may have been another source for the readings (Smelik 1974: 290–4; Layton 1987: 357–409). But identifying the precise texts is not critical. The salient point is that Egeria and other pilgrims read from works by and about Thomas at a shrine that was considered sacred to him in a city that claimed a special association with his legacy. Edessa was a natural location for reading these stories as a way of honouring this apostle and contributing to his cult.

Egeria later voyaged to Seleucia and the shrine of Thecla, a traditional companion of the Apostle Paul who is considered the Christian female protomartyr. Egeria recounts that 'prayer was offered at the martyr shrine, and the whole of the *Acts of Saint Thecla* was

[1] For other examples of the recitation of texts at shrines, see Delehaye (1927: 191–3); Dix (1945: 470–2); Urner (1952); Gaiffier (1954; 1969).

read' (*It. Eg.* 23.5). She is almost certainly referring to a section from the Acts of Paul, a late second-century account of the travels of the virgin Thecla alongside the Apostle Paul. Thecla's traditional burial site was in Seleucia, which was one of the primary centres for her cult in this period (Davis 2001). As part of the commemorations at the shrines of both Thomas and Thecla, then, the ritual recitation of texts about the saint played a central role.

Pilgrimage

The example of Egeria highlights another practice that contributed to the cult of the saints, namely, pilgrimage (see Feldt, Chapter 17 in this volume). This ritual, adapted by Christians from Greek and Roman religion, involved travel to designated places in order to honour holy people. The distance of the journey was not the primary consideration, and thus local pilgrimages were common in early Christianity. The residents of Seleucia and Tarsus regularly engaged in mutual pilgrimage between the site for Thecla in Seleucia, which Egeria visited, and some kind of veneration site for the Apostle Paul in Tarsus, his hometown (Basil of Seleucia, *Mirac. Theclae* 4, 29). The Church Father Jerome lived and studied in Rome in 365 CE, and he and some friends had a practice of visiting martyr shrines on Sundays. This was not a wholly pleasant experience, for many of the tombs were below ground[2] and could be accessed only by descending into the subterranean darkness: 'Many times we entered the crypts, which were dug into the bowels of the earth … Rarely some light entered from above and tempered our dread of the shadows … We advanced one step at a time, surrounded by the gloomy night' (*Comm. Ezech.* 40.5).

Others travelled great distances on pilgrimage. Egeria's journey took her from Western Europe as far as Egypt and Syria. She visited the shrines of many saints and took part in liturgical celebrations there, in addition to visiting traditional biblical sites. Perhaps the most famous Christian pilgrim of antiquity was Constantine's mother, Helena, who travelled from Rome to Palestine in the early fourth century. There she established churches at several holy sites, most famously the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem (Eusebius of Caesarea, *Vit. Const.* 3.42–6). Bishop Paulinus of Nola made repeated pilgrimages to Rome at the time of the Feast of Peter and Paul: 'I went to Rome for that venerable day of the apostolic feast … I spent the mornings in votive prayer at the sacred memorials of the apostles and martyrs, whom I venerated with care' (Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 17.1–2). This ritualized travel was an annual tradition for the bishop from around 394 to 406 CE. Elsewhere he described this yearly trip as his 'solemn custom' and his 'votive offering' (*Ep.* 20.2; 43.1). By participating in the ritual of pilgrimage, Paulinus was also contributing to the proliferation of the cult of the saints, in this case, particularly of Peter and Paul.

[2] The practice of referring to all underground burials in Rome as catacombs began in the Middle Ages. In antiquity, the Catacombs referred to a specific site along the Appian Road, a joint cult site for Peter and Paul (Rutgers 2000: 43; Eastman 2011: 71–2).

Veneration of Relics

The veneration of relics was another ritualized practice that was a common component of the cults of many saints. Because the martyrs lived exceptional lives and died exceptional deaths, their physical remains (*reliquiae*) were believed to possess sacred power for blessing or even physical healing. This notion may go back to a story in Acts in which some were healed by having Peter's shadow fall over them as he passed by (Acts 5:15). If the shadow could bring about healing, how much more so direct contact with the physical remains of a holy person? John Chrysostom desired to travel from Antioch to Rome on pilgrimage to see the tomb of Paul and touch his physical remains:

> If only now it were permitted to me to embrace the body of Paul, to be riveted to his tomb, and to see the dust of that body that filled up what was lacking from Christ, that bore the marks, that sowed the proclamation everywhere, the dust of that body in which he ran about everywhere, the dust of that body through which Christ spoke clearly. (*Hom. Rom.* 32.3)

At any shrine the entire body did not need to be present, because any part was equal to the whole, including drops of a martyr's blood: 'Even drops of their blood and small tokens of their passion [i.e. relics] are as powerful as their bodies' (Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or. 4 [C. Jul.]* 69). We refer to these physical remains of the holy person as primary relics, but this category also includes items that had come into direct contact with the saint during her or his lifetime. Thus, chains that were believed to have bound the apostles Peter and Paul were considered as holy and powerful as their bodies, and the faithful sought to procure fragments from these chains. The practice of taking filings occurred at the Church of St Peter in Chains in Rome, and 1 August eventually became the feast day to celebrate Peter's chains (Duchesne 1909: 297). Likewise in the Basilica of Paul, fragments of chains were distributed. In 594 CE the Empress Constantina wrote to Gregory I, bishop of Rome, to request pieces of Paul's chains for a new chapel in Constantinople. In his letter denying her request, Gregory explains that while chain fragments have been responsible for 'many miracles', they can be difficult to acquire:

> For many often come and seek a blessing from the same chains, so a priest stands by with a file to receive a small portion from the filings. For some of those seeking them, something is cut from the very chains so rapidly that there is no delay. But for others seeking them, the file is drawn over those chains for a long time, and yet there is no chance of anything coming off them. (Gregory I, *Ep.* 4.30; Martyn 2004: 312)[3]

[3] Gregory records that he sent some filings from Paul's chains to other dignitaries in the ecclesiastical or political hierarchies (*Ep.* 1.25, 1.29, 1.30, 7.23, 7.25, 8.33, 9.229, 11.43, and 13.43).

More ubiquitous and easier to acquire were secondary relics. These objects had come into contact with primary relics and were thereafter believed to possess spiritual power. In the same letter to Constantina, Gregory describes the process by which pieces of cloth were lowered through a hole in the altar so they would touch the coffin of the apostle Paul, after which they could be taken home by pilgrims as relics (Eastman 2011: 60–1; cf. Acts 19:12). Another common secondary relic was holy oil. Archaeological and literary evidence tells us that at some sites oil was poured into an opening on the top of a sacrophagus, and a hole was drilled in the bottom through which the oil could run out (Paulinus of Nola, *Car*. 21.586–600; Lassus 1947: 163–4). Because the oil had come into contact with the relics, it was now imbued with the saint's power. John Chrysostom (*Mart*., PG 50: 664–5), Theodoret of Cyrrhus (*Hist. eccl*. 21), and Gregory of Tours (*Vit. Mart*. 1.2) are among those who witness to the miraculous power of holy oil in flasks. Pilgrims could collect the oil in ceramic flasks and carry them home as tokens of their pilgrimage. Numerous examples of these flasks survive from antiquity. For example, at a shrine in Egypt dedicated to Thecla and a local martyr, Menas, visitors could acquire flasks with a picture of Menas on one side and the female protomartyr on the other. These objects were used for transporting holy oil, or perhaps in some cases holy water, as not just a memento but also a secondary relic (Davis 2001: 114–26).

The Impact of the Cult

The presence and promotion of the cult of the saints, which by all accounts was very popular, impacted the development of Christianity in several ways. First, because the martyrs and saints were considered superior to other Christians, the idea developed that martyrs comprised an elite class of Christians. Although Paul used the word saint to refer to all believers (Col. 1:1–2), all Christians were in fact not equal. Certain figures, such as Thecla and Peter, were thought to have more influence on Earth and in the heavenly courts because they had sacrificed their lives for their faith. Their physical remains contained and exuded holiness in ways that the bodies of others did not.

Second, because the martyrs had proven their worth through suffering, suffering became one of the markers of true Christian identity. Bishop Cyprian of Carthage, for example, was one of the most influential figures of early Christian North Africa. However, for a time his authority was undermined, because he had fled Carthage during a period of persecution under the Emperor Decius. Cyprian learned his lesson, so when another persecution arose under Valerian, he chose the path of exile and eventual martyrdom. It was in fact during this exile right before the end of his life that he wrote a treatise encouraging others to embrace the path of martyrdom (*Exhortation to Martyrdom, To Fortunatus*). He is remembered as North Africa's most important martyr, and his legacy as a martyr later became a battle ground between the competing authority structures during the Donatist Controversy (Eastman 2011: 160–3).

Third, the foundation narratives for the cults of various saints emphasized a strong anti-imperial rhetoric. Although Paul (Rom. 13:1) and the authors of 1 Timothy (2:1–4) and 1 Peter (2:17), likely writing during periods of peace, encourage Christians to pray for and submit to the government officials, the author of Revelation presents Rome as a filthy prostitute drinking the blood of the saints (17:1–6). It is this latter perspective that is picked up in the stories of the deaths of martyrs such as Paul, Peter, Polycarp, Thecla, and others. Roman officials are presented as agents of an antagonistic, even satanic, system. Yet the Roman Empire was not the only target of such rhetoric, for the Acts of the Persian Martyrs claim similar malfeasance by rulers in the East, particularly the Sasanian king Shapur II (e.g. *Martyrdom of Blessed Simeon bar Ṣabbaʿe*). The anti-imperial trope became so standard in martyrdom stories that even authors writing after the peace of the church include wicked imperial officials when they are claiming to describe events prior to the time of Constantine and the legalization of Christianity (e.g. *Passion of Sebastian*).

Finally, control of the cult of the saints and the sites at which relics were venerated became political capital in ecclesiastical disputes. A bishop could demonstrate and expand his authority by controlling the sites at which Christians told stories about the saints, visited on pilgrimage, and venerated relics (Brown 2014: 31–3, 93–6). Ambrose of Milan serves as a famous example of this. During the period of his episcopacy, there was vehement competition for control of the churches of Milan between Ambrose, a pro-Nicene bishop, and his Arian rivals supported by the Empress Justina. Ambrose perceived that he risked losing control of a certain basilica that he had built, but then a miraculous vision revealed to him the location of the relics of two previously unknown martyrs, Protasius and Gervasius. He found and placed their relics in this basilica and was therefore recognized as the patron of their cults, which also assured him control of the space (*Ep*. 22; Williams 1995: 218–23). He used a similar strategy to ensure his control of the Basilica of the Apostles, when he placed there the relics of another previously unknown martyr, Nazarius (Paulinus of Milan, *Vit. Ambr.* 32). Thus, all those coming to honour these martyrs were implicitly recognizing the authority of Ambrose and his pro-Nicene faction.

The converse of this dynamic was also true. Optatus of Milevis, a champion of the Caecilianist faction (self-identified as 'Catholic') in the Donatist Controversy, sought to prove the illegitimacy of Victor, a Donatist bishop in Rome, by highlighting his lack of access to the shrines of Paul and Peter: 'Behold, in Rome are the shrines of the two apostles. Will you tell me whether [Victor] has been able to approach them, or has offered sacrifice in those places, where, as is certain, are these shrines of the saints?' (*Adv. Donat*. 2.4.2). The fact that Victor was unable to preside at the Eucharist ('offer sacrifice') at the apostolic shrines was evidence that he was a false bishop. Lack of authority at the cult sites of saints showed lack of legitimacy as a bishop.

Rituals such as the telling of stories, pilgrimage, and relic veneration were central elements in the development of the cult of the saints in early Christianity. The cults created by these and other rituals help shape the profile of Christianity and the sensibility of Christians: martyrs were seen as a special class of Christians; suffering was viewed as the

mark of true Christianity; and a certain distrust of imperial officials was implanted into the collective memory of Christianity. Also, by making the faithful active participants in the various cults, these rituals strengthened ties to particular martyrs and particular places, which could be controlled by enterprising bishops. No narrative of the earliest Christian centuries, therefore, is complete without an adequate exploration of the role of ritual in the cult of the saints.

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CHAPTER 40

RITUAL AND THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF URBAN SPACE

JACOB A. LATHAM

Introduction

Ancient cities are commonly understood as a collocation of their built environment (monumental, utilitarian, and domestic structures), political organization (town councils, etc.), and demography (population and social stratification). This eminently reasonable conceptualization of the ancient city—as its buildings, institutions, and inhabitants—has, unsurprisingly, impacted the study of the transformations of the city in late antiquity. Under the auspices of political (primarily imperial) and Christian (primarily ecclesiastical) authority, new forms of urbanism developed: a process commonly labelled 'Christianization' that was typified by monumental church construction (sometimes associated with temple destruction), the institutional development of the episcopacy (alongside the 'decline' of classical civic politics), and/or the conversion of urban populations (concomitant with the suppression of ancient Mediterranean traditional religions) (e.g. Salzman 2002; Brands and Severin 2003; Rapp 2005; Hahn, Emmel, and Gotter 2008).

Classical cities, however, were more than buildings, institutions, or even their citizen conglomerate. Equally as important were the fleeting features of city life: ceremonies, festivals, markets, political events, and above all processions, which shaped how urban residents understood themselves, their society, and their city. A Roman city was not only its people in statistical aggregate—it was also their ideas and practices which were necessarily shaped by, and which also shaped, architectural and institutional frameworks, spaces and places, as well institutions and administration. In other words, the city was both imagined and lived. To make cities 'Christian' then,

Christian preachers and authors re-framed and re-interpreted the classical city even as Christian groups began to develop their own forms of civic ceremonial—in addition, of course, to constructing basilicas, institutionalizing the episcopacy, and evangelizing non-Christians.

That is, ritualized talking and walking (sermons and processions) worked to re-imagine the city, re-orient its centres, and transform urban habits. Christian preachers, like John Chrysostom, attempted to re-interpret the city, re-valuing its institutions, places, practices, and traditions in line with developing Christian mores. Some Christian epigraphic texts functioned similarly, like those of Bishop Damasus which attempted to write a Christian history into the urban fabric of the city, simultaneously re-writing civic history. Along with what one might call the rhetorical re-imagination of the city, urban practices, movements, and habits were also impacted by the development of Christian or Christianized processions. Beginning with informal trips to martyr shrines outside the walls, which were only gradually formalized into liturgical rites under the authority of a bishop, Christian movements worked, in significant ways, to turn the city inside out. Intramural processions also developed, notably in stational liturgies, during which a bishop, his retinue, and often some part of his congregation processed from one church, typically the cathedral, to a second to perform a ritual. Even some pre-existing processional ceremonies were Christianized, like the imperial *adventus* which eventually included the bishop and his clergy in its performance and churches in its itinerary. And so, over several centuries, a burgeoning Christian calendar regulated both temporal rhythms and spatial choreography.

The ritual Christianization of cities did not really begin until (well) after the conversion of Constantine. Even then, the Christianization of urban space (ritual or otherwise) was a slow and stuttering process that both varied considerably by region and stretched out over centuries. This is true, in large part, because many, if not most, pre-existing buildings, civic institutions, and urban traditions were continuously maintained throughout the fourth century, though they changed considerably in the fifth and sixth centuries. In particular, traditional civic spectacle (games, shows, and processions) were performed throughout the fourth and fifth centuries, though with increasing limitations during the fifth and especially the sixth centuries. As classical urbanism in all its forms (political, economic, social, cultural, ludic) slowly, fitfully, and locally declined, transformed, or even at times endured, a Christian (image of the) city both developed and emerged from the ancient city, eventually supplanting it.

Without delving into the intricacies of ritual theory (see Part I of this volume), for present purposes, ritual describes a formally and specially produced performance or, perhaps better, liturgy (Bell 1997: 138–69; Rappaport 1999: 23–58). In short, an act 'properly' done. As Jonathan Z. Smith argued, '*Ritual is a means of performing the way things ought to be in conscious tension to the way things are in such a way that this ritualized perfection is recollected in the ordinary, uncontrolled, course of things*' (1982: 63; emphasis in original; see also Smith 1987: 109). Ritual so defined is akin to

mundane practices, like talking and walking. But such activities were ritualized, that is, distinguished from quotidian practices by means of formal, indeed liturgical, order and ceremonial. Even so, ritual and ordinary practice remain undeniably connected (Bell 1992; 1998).

Ritual so defined will typically be conducted in a specially framed way by authorized agents who claim to have a certain authority or expertise. Chatting about civic history over dinner is one thing; a sermon on civic tradition at church during the weekly liturgy is another. Ordinary speech becomes a sermon when delivered by the right person (usually a bishop or priest) in the right place (a church or shrine) at the right time (Sunday liturgy or other festival) to the right audience (the congregation) (Lincoln 1994: 1–13). Similarly, strolling through town is one thing; processing through it led by crosses and chanting psalms with the bishop is another. Crowds making their way to a church become a procession when their disparate movements are organized as a ritual performance. In both cases, ritualization creates authority or, at least, lays claim to it. This claim to authority allows, potentially, ritualized talking to alter ideas, perceptions, and values and ritualized walking to claim the city, mark significance, and make place—both in the imagination and on the ground.

Christianization is also a troublesome concept, but one which, unlike ritual, is under-theorized (Sweetman 2010: 207–8; with Busine 2015; Inglebert 2010; and Watts 2015: a prolegomena to the theorization of Christianization). The term may mean to make some*one* or some*thing* Christian—to proselytize an individual or to transform a place, a building, an activity in some more or less identifiably Christian way. In this chapter, Christianization refers to the process by which some*thing* (specifically cities) becomes 'Christian' by ritual means. To make something Christian, Christianity might have adapted or accommodated that thing or that thing might have been 'depaganized' or 'secularized', that is rendered (ostensibly) religiously neutral. Christian practices may subsequently impact this accommodated or neutralized thing, in effect, Christianizing it. Christianization may also include the creation of new, specifically Christian equivalents of or substitutions for existing things with the seeming aim of replacing those things, even neutralizing things—the 'drain[ing] of the "secular"' as R. A. Markus styled it—even if that process was not total or complete (Hahn 2015: on depaganization; Lim 2009; 2012: on secularization; Markus 1990: 15; Latham 2016: 186–207). Indeed, Christianization may be merely token. A building or a wall can be Christianized by the addition of a cross, even though the building itself or the city contained within the wall continued much as it had before. So-called magical rites can be Christianized by the inclusion of Christ in the incantation, even if the ritual is ultimately addressed to a deity or deities other than or in addition to the Christian god (Frankfurter 2010).

In all of these cases, Christianization was connected to power: the perceived power of the Christian god, but moreover the earthly authority of its practitioners, officials, institutions, and patrons. The informal addition of crosses to the Aurelian wall of Rome in the fourth or more likely the fifth century was meant to supplement the city's physical

defences; the inclusion of Christ in an incantation to make it more efficacious (Sotinel 2015). To build a monumental Christian basilica next to a city's main civic temple in an effort, ultimately successful, to supersede it, as at Jerash/Gerasa, is part of the process of Christianization—at least in retrospect (Wharton 1995). Indeed, only historical hindsight knows that Christianity 'won'. By contrast, Jews built synagogues, many of which were eventually led by rabbis, and so it seems reasonable, at a certain point, to talk about the 'Rabbinification' of Judaism, but not the Judaization of the city in which the synagogue was built—at least not in late antiquity. Christianization, like ritual, is intertwined with power—episcopal and imperial—and also Christian 'triumph', at least after the fact.

Finally, urban space may be defined as a built environment of a certain density of building and population with attendant civic institutions and cultural traditions. A city was built and governed, imagined, and lived as theorized by Henri Lefebvre. According to Lefebvre, urban space comprised 'spatial practices', perceived or visible space (something like built and institutional spaces combined), 'representations of space', conceived or conceptualizations of space, and 'representational spaces', lived or experienced space (Lefebvre 1991: 33, 38–9). And so, imagination and representations as well as practices and lived experience mattered as much as monuments and magistrates in the production or reproduction of urban space.

Lefebvre's 'representations [or conceptions] of space' and 'representational [or lived] spaces' may be fruitfully compared to the image of city as conceived by Kevin Lynch, even though they do not directly map onto each other. According to Lynch, an image of the city is both 'an organizer of activity', a kind of practical map resulting from lived experienced (akin to representational spaces) by which one may physically navigate the city, and 'a basis for the ordering of knowledge', a representation of space by which one may plot the social and cultural contours of a city (Lynch 1960: 126). And so, sermons, inscriptions, and processions impacted the image of the city as a framework of knowledge and an organizer of activity, following Lynch, or as a representation (or conception) of space and representational (or lived) space, according to Lefebvre. That is to say, ritual acts of place-making, whether rhetorical or performed, changed the city as much as church construction, institutional development, or conversion, even though they did not (physically) change a thing.

Even though the, surprisingly slow, construction of monumental Christian churches and the development of ecclesiastical civic institutions most obviously Christianized Roman cities by transforming their 'spatial practices', the more tangible and enduring forms of urban space (its architectural and institutional forms), sermons, inscriptions, and processions equally transformed representations or conceptions of space and representational or lived spaces. Ritualized walking and talking re-configured the city in the imagination and in practice. By such ritual means the image of the city as a framework of knowledge and an organizer of activity was Christianized even if incompletely and only for some. After all, not everyone, even if they were Christian, accepted everything pronounced in sermons, read inscriptions, or participated in processions.

From Temple to Church: Destruction and Construction

In the early-fifth century, according to a disputed text (the *Life of Bishop Porphyry of Gaza*), drought-stricken Gazans turned to traditional techniques—sacrifices, prayers, and hymns—to convince the god Marnas to allow rain to fall. When these efforts failed, bishop Porphyry of Gaza (*c*.346–420?) orchestrated a competing drought response. The bishop organized a vigil, after which Christian Gazans 'took the sign of the precious cross, which was leading our way, and then went out, chanting hymns, to the old church in the west of the city' (*Vit. Porph*. 20; Rapp 2000: 61). After services at the old church, the procession continued to an extramural martyrion. Finding the city gate locked upon their return, Porphyry's people persevered in prayer for two hours until a torrential, and thus miraculous, rain fell.

A number of Gazans joined the small congregation after this miracle, while bishop Porphyry set his sights on Gaza's temples, especially the Marneion. After eventually securing imperial permission and, importantly, military support, Porphyry took control of the Marneion to which he set fire per an oracle of Christ pronounced through a young boy. Once the non-Christian Gazans and the smouldering remains of the temple cooled off, Porphyry organized a kind of triumph:

> When the congregation had gathered with tools [to dig the foundation] in the holy church named 'Peace', he ordered that all, chanting psalms together, proceed to the former Marneion; he followed behind, carrying the holy Gospel, surrounded by pious clergy, truly imitating Christ with his disciples. Leading the congregation was Barochas [a deacon] of eternal memory, holding the form of the sign of the cross, while on either side of the congregation were the soldiers who had been left behind for the sake of good order in the city. They chanted psalms while they were walking, and at a set break in the psalm, they said the Alleluia. (*Vit. Porph*. 77; Rapp 2000: 71)

After this artfully orchestrated procession flanked by its indispensable military escort, the congregation set to digging the foundation shouting 'Christ had conquered!' (*Vit. Porph*. 78). Finally, five years later, a magnificent church, the Eudoxiane, named after the Empress Eudoxia, was dedicated in a lavish ceremony on Easter Sunday at which Porphyry, ever the showman, spared no expense or expression of piety.

This oft-cited tale of the destruction and desecration of an active temple—an exceptional and unusual example of 'depaganization', whose outsized drama balances its rarity—and the subsequent construction of a large Christian church on its former location serves as an explicit example of the blatantly physical Christianization of urban space. The central temple of Gaza was burned to the ground and fully excavated, leaving no trace except the marble paving from one of the inner sanctuary spaces which was 'laid down as pavement of the street outside, in front of the temple,

so that they would be trampled upon not only by men, but also by women, dogs, pigs, and beasts' (*Vit. Porph.* 76; Rapp 2000: 71). Eudoxia herself provided thirty-two 'marvellous and large' marble columns for a huge, monumental church that was erected over the utterly exorcised former Marneion (*Vit. Porph.* 84). Even though this temple was ostensibly destroyed and replaced by a monumental Christian basilica, most temples were seemingly left to fall into ruin with the simple passage of time. Likewise, even though monumental church construction began with Constantine, most fourth-century Christians would have attended services at the same places as they would have in the third century—houses or other private spaces, even if renovated or adapted (Bowes 2009: 71–5).

In addition to destruction-construction, the story equally highlights the power of the bishop and the 'conversion' of Gazans. At each stage of the narrative, sceptical Gazans were persuaded to join Porphyry by the power of the Christian God and the imperial resources, both financial and military, at the disposal of the bishop. In short, this *Life* portrays the standard elements of the Christianization of classical cities: church construction (preceded in this case by temple destruction), the civic authority of bishops (aided mightily by imperial arms and funds), and mass-scale conversions (concomitant with the suppression of local Gazan religion).

More importantly for this study, rituals prefaced or accompanied each of these standard features. Porphyry supposedly organized a fast (see Finn, Chapter 38 in this volume) and vigil which preceded a lengthy procession that competed with and ultimately 'defeated' the traditional rites of the Gazans. Led by the cross, this procession traversed Gaza from the cathedral to the old church and then continued outside the walls to a martyr shrine (in short, turning the city inside out) with prayers and genuflections at each station. In the end, these rituals catalyzed divine mercy, the rain miracle. Later, after another fast and a supplication, a young boy, 'possessed' by Christ, explained how to destroy the Marneion. Before actually setting fire to the temple, the bishop and those present prayed. Finally, Porphyry conducted a spectacular and hierarchically arranged procession to the former temple. A deacon holding a cross led the way followed by the congregation holding tools and chanting psalms while flanked by soldiers. The stately Porphyry holding the gospels and his clerical entourage concluded the procession—a veritable 'triumph'.

Admittedly, the *Life of Porphyry* may well be a confection from the mid-sixth century or later, rather than the reminiscences of Mark, a deacon of Gaza under (the otherwise unattested) bishop Porphyry, as the text itself maintains (Barnes 2011: 260–83; Busine 2013: 330–2; but see Trombley 2001: 1.246–82 on its reliability). Even if the story may not be wholly historical, but rather hagiographical, it may still be read as an etiological foundation myth for the church of Gaza. In other words, the text may witness the rhetorical re-imagination of Gaza, if not its physical (or ritual) Christianization. Whether fictitious or not, the *Life* captures the way that (some) Christians re-imagined their city, re-defining the contours of its sacred places with words.

The Rhetorical City

A City in Sermons: John Chrysostom's Pastoral Antioch

Just because the *Life of Porphyry* may be a fiction does not mean that it is without historical significance. As Pierre Bourdieu noted, rituals (even if fictitious) have symbolic efficacy, 'the power … to act on reality by acting on its representation' (Bourdieu 1991: 119). The *Life* could have shaped historical memories and present conceptions of sixth-century, if not earlier, Gazans and so also their representation(s) or conception(s) of space and image(s) of the city as a framework of knowledge. The impact of the rhetorical re-imagination of the city may be even stronger in the case of sermons, whose ritual staging may have lent them greater authority. The right speech (in this case a sermon), pronounced by the right person (a bishop or priest), in the right place (a church or a shrine), to the right audience (a Christian congregation) may be authoritative. In other words, a properly staged sermon may be more likely to elicit approval or, at least, less likely to prompt quiet murmuring or, even worse, bored contempt. And so, when John Chrysostom (347–407), for example, railed against temples, theatres, and synagogues, he re-described Antioch, translating it according to his own understanding of Christianity, which could have had an impact on his audience, even if much of his audience held different ideas about what it meant to be Christian (Shepardson 2015: 58–128; Stenger 2015; and a broader study in Elm 2014).

In some cases, Chrysostom sought to teach his audience to see the city and its practices from a new (his) perspective. For example, after the relics of Babylas were installed in the sanctuary of Apollo at Daphne, Chrysostom conjured a leisure trip out to the pleasant suburb, where

> as soon as anyone arrives at Daphne and sees the martyr's shrine from the entrance of the suburb, he is chastened and, becoming more pious by the sight and imagining the blessed one, immediately hastens to the coffin; and when he comes there, he is affected with greater fear, renounces all cynicism, and departs on wings. (*Bab*. 70; FC 73: 116)

The martyr shrine was, temporarily, physically present (material Christianization, for a few years at any rate), but Chrysostom's ritualized talking (the sermon) retrospectively re-described a common day trip as a kind of conversion experience—expecting his audience, therefore, to recognize the presence of the martyr at his shrine, which Chrysostom felt should induce Antiochenes to comport themselves with decorum even at Daphne.

Chrysostom seems to have faced a stiffer challenge when he attempted to re-value civic spectacles. Chrysostom took on the chariot races, whose allure remained potent for all Antiochenes: 'again the chariot-races are on, and again our congregation has shrunk' (*De incomprehensibili natura dei* 7.1; FC 72: 184). He also targeted theatre shows,

which were, according to Chrysostom, not just licentious, a standard bit of moralizing, but also stood in direct opposition to the church itself:

> And they ['recalcitrant' Christians and other Antiochenes] did not cease, but always on this day they gather together at the unlawful spectacles of the dancers, and they set their diabolical assembly against the full measure of the church of God, and their cries from there, being carried by the greatest vehemence, held out against [our] psalmody here. (*Stat*. 15.1; Shepardson 2015: 96)

The theatre was one of the pomps of the Devil at which no 'good' Christian would be found, as Christian authors beginning with Tertullian contended (*Spect*. 10, 17). John Chrysostom did not simply try to frame experience, he also tried to control movement.

For example, Chrysostom embarked on a project against the continuing attractions of the synagogue, which (some) Christians frequented as they did the theatre. For Chrysostom, 'there is no difference between the theatre and the synagogue' (*Adv. Jud*. 1.2; FC 68: 9). Painting an even more lurid picture, he continued, 'the synagogue is not only a brothel and a theatre; it is also a den of robbers and a lodging for wild beasts' (*Adv. Jud*. 1.3; FC 68: 10–11). That is, the synagogue was even more depraved than a whore-house, a theatre, or even a temple: 'the Jews practice a deceit which is more dangerous. In their synagogue stands an invisible altar of deceit on which they sacrifice not sheep and calves but the souls of men' (*Adv. Jud*. 1.6; FC 68: 23). Like temples and theatres (whose allure, nonetheless endured), demons and degeneracy haunted synagogues, whose presence, however, was masked by tradition and scriptural respectability. In railing against the synagogue, Chrysostom's often histrionic rhetoric had to combat what seems to have been a relatively widely held belief that synagogues were, in fact, sacred, or at least venerable. Though there are no means to judge his success, Chrysostom undoubtedly sought to define and police community boundaries in explicitly spatial terms. The city could be a dangerous place. Fortunately, Chrysostom's congregation had a 'right-thinking' guide.

While no 'good' Christian would be present at the theatre or so much as consider entering a synagogue, she should be in church. In theory, God was omnipresent, even so, prayer at church under priestly surveillance was more effective—a sharp contrast with Jerome's contemporaneous anxieties about the dangers of church attendance for domestic virgins at Rome (*Epist*. 107.9, 127.4, 128.4). As Chrysostom insisted:

> Yes, you can pray at home, but not the same way as you can in the church … When you call upon the Lord by yourself, he does not listen to you in the same way as when you invoke him along with your brothers. Here in church you have something more. Here you have the oneness of mind, the unison of voices, the common bond of love, and the prayers of priests. (*De incomprehensibili natura dei* 3.34; FC 72: 110–11)

By such rhetoric, Chrysostom attempted to change Bourdieu's representation of reality or Lefebvre's representations of space. Re-valuing a value-laden landscape really did

change the city—or at least how it was imagined. In other words, Chrysostom's sermons aimed to alter the image of Antioch as a framework of knowledge.

An Inscribed City: Bishop Damasus' Rome

Bishop Damasus (366–384) also attempted to convert the image of the city as a framework of knowledge by means of words: in this case, versified inscriptions honouring some of Rome's martyrs. These inscriptions were erected at martyr tombs as part of a more general, but limited, project of monumentalizing the very special dead. These epigraphic poems were not part of a ritual per se, but they would have been conspicuous on the martyr's feast day when some number of Christians met at the shrine to celebrate the saint, a few of whom might have recited these poems (see Eastman, Chapter 39 in this volume; Lønstrup Dal Santo 2015: 150). Even though these poems were not ritualized speech, as were sermons, still they were enduring, epigraphic special speech, not everyday chit-chat. Moreover, in addition to 'mapping' a Christian Rome, these inscribed poems also addressed historical memory as a way to re-craft civic identity.

By his epigrams, Damasus claimed to have rescued the memory of some martyrs from oblivion, yet sadly for others the 'length of time has not been able to preserve their names or number' (*ED* 42.2; Curran 2000: esp. 148–55; Sághy 2012). To foster remembrance, Damasus 'invented' their tombs and stories—that is, he sought them out, found them, and then commemorated them (from the Latin *inveniō*: to encounter, discover, or invent), often with divine inspiration. For example, 'In sleepbringing night a dream stirs the mind. / It reveals the hiding place that contains the guiltless man's limbs. / He is sought; discovered he is venerated . . . / Damasus has highlighted his merit; you venerate his tomb' (*ED* 21.9–12). Having restored the martyr's memory at his tomb, a *memoria martyrum*, Damasus then directly addressed the reader asking her to venerate the saint. Such direct address was relatively common on funerary epitaphs, but here its similarity to a sermon with its call to action is important.

In addition to this memory work, these poems honoured Rome's martyrs in classicizing terms in an attempt, seemingly, to cobble together an appropriately classical Christian past (Trout 2003). In effect, Damasus rewrote a Christian past in a Roman idiom in order to write Christianity into and over Rome's history. And so, Damasus employed classical metre and other poetical devices, especially echoes of Vergil, perhaps so that his learned elite readers might feel comfortable (e.g. *ED* 21.2 with an allusion to Vergil's *Allecto*; Trout 2015: 18–19). What is more, Damasus even shifted a few of Vergil's lines on Augustus, 'two trophies snatched by force from far-sundered foes' (*Georg.* 3.32; LCL 63: 179) to Stephen the protomartyr, 'he who carried off the trophy from the enemy' (*ED* 15.4; see also *ED* 16.4). Damasus also seems to have suggested that Peter and Paul had displaced the Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux: 'The East sent its apostles . . . / they reached the heavenly asylum . . . / Rome has the right to claim them as her own citizens. / These things Damasus wishes to relate in your praise, O new stars' (*ED* 20). Peter and Paul, Rome's new stars from the East, seem poised to take on the Dioscuri, apotheosized

Eastern heroes who played a leading role in the myth-history of the Roman republic and so also in aristocratic Roman identity. Rome's history becomes Christian.

With similar effect, Damasus employed the language of triumph: 'The singular glory of the Roman people rejoices in them / because with Sixtus as their leader at the time they merited Christ's triumphs'(*ED* 25.6–7; see also *ED* 8.8). Damasus re-imagined bishop Sixtus as a *triumphator* who received the acclaim of the people as he metaphorically processed in heaven. Once only emperors triumphed, now martyrs do. Importantly, the monumentalization of the cult of saints, of which Damasus' inscriptions were a part, seems to have been spurred to some degree by informal trips out to the martyrs, as a means to ritualize these unceremonious practices under the auspices of the bishop. In other words, representations of space are related to representational (lived) spaces—as well as spatial, that is architectural and institutional, practices—much as the image of the city is both a framework of knowledge and an organizer of activity. In other words, the rhetorical city was connected to the performed one.

The Performed City

Damasus' verses were effective as a mechanism of memory to the extent to which they were seen by visitors to extramural martyr shrines. A near-contemporary of Damasus, the Spanish poet Prudentius who had spent a little time at Rome, conjured a scene at the catacombs where 'many a grave is lettered and tells the martyr's name or bears some epitaph', perhaps one of Damasus' *elogia* (*Perist*. 11.7–8; LCL 398: 305). Such trips, it would seem, were commonplace, but as yet un-ritualized. Another contemporary of Damasus, Jerome, recalled his schoolboy years in Rome when he and his classmates used to make the rounds of the tombs of the very special dead: 'Frequently, I used to enter the crypts [catacombs], dug deep in the ground … It is all so dark there that prophecy seems to be fulfilled: "Let the living descend into hell" [Psalm 55.15]' (*Comm. Ezech*. 12.40). By contrast, Prudentius evoked a rather more joyous journey from the city to a martyr shrine, now in a church not underground:

> The majestic city disgorges her Romans in a stream … patricians and plebeian … equally from Alba's gates the white-robed troops deploy … Loud sounds of rejoicing rise from diverse roads leading from different places … For these great throngs the cavern is clearly too confined … But there close by stands another church. (*Perist*. 11.199–214; LCL 398: 319)

At Rome, most public or civic ceremonies took place in the monumental centre, the Forum, the Circus Maximus, the theatres, the Flavian amphitheatre (the Colosseum)—with many notable exceptions, in particular funerary celebrations and familial graveside rites, which suggests that martyr-festival spatial practices differed by degree not kind. Nonetheless, in an important sense, Jerome's classmates and Prudentius' crowds

turned Rome inside out. At Rome, the (Christian) holy was not (yet or, better, primarily) found in the civic centre or even within the walls, but rather in the cemeteries. This (partial) inversion of the classical city was part of a wider pattern. Elsewhere, Christians made similar extramural excursions to visit *martyria* as well as ascetics and other holy people (Frank 2000).

For the most part, these crowds on the *iter ad sanctos* (the road to the saints) are just that, crowds which lacked order, organization, and spectacularity: their trips to the tombs were more like a stroll through town instead of a procession. Jerome and his fellow students and Prudentius' crowds knew *where* to go but not yet *how* to go. Indeed, just prior to his evocation of crowds descending on the martyr en masse, Prudentius noted humbler visits, when people simply assembled on their own to venerate the saints (*Perist*. 11.189–90). It seems bishops (like Damasus) attempted to monumentalize and regularize—to ritualize—these popular and uncoordinated practices.

Once transformed into full-fledged processions, trips to the martyrs and other kinds of urban movement were particularly important means of place-making. Processions made and marked significance: in particular, significant people (procession participants were usually arranged in hierarchical fashion and typically construed as a kind of civic cross-section) and significant places (the origin and destination especially, but the entire itinerary mattered). In short, processions produced and performed an image of the city in the full sense—both a conceptual or symbolic 'map' of the city and a practical guide of urban spaces. What is more, processions intertwined in their very performance spatial practices (e.g. monuments and magistrates), representations of space, and representational (lived) spaces to construct meaningful places.

To process through a space is to claim it. Indeed, Clifford Geertz remarked in an oft-cited passage:

> Royal progresses locate the society's center and affirm its connection with transcendent things by stamping a territory with ritual signs of dominance. When kings journey around the countryside … they mark it, like some wolf or tiger spreading his scent through his territory, as almost physically part of them. (1983: 125)

A formally, even liturgically organized procession stakes a claim on the city unlike the ad hoc groups of Jerome and Prudentius, whose presence may well have gone unnoticed. Ritual processions aim at an audience, whose presence suggests, at least, tacit acceptance that the procession is making a claim—however contested—as argued by Roy Rappaport (1999: 107–38). And so, Christian processions in which masses of self-identified Christians moved through the landscape singing hymns and parading Christian symbols attempted to claim the streets and the city, as in the *Life of Porphyry*, where Porphyry's community figuratively and quite literally claimed Gaza with an elaborate procession from a church to the former Marneion, which they then wholly uprooted in order to build a new church.

Christianity on Parade

Geertz's comment on royal progresses seems especially germane to the Jerusalem stational liturgy, a practice in which the bishop would celebrate events from the life (and death) of Christ at the very location where and on the very days when they were supposed to have happened. At each location, a Latin traveller conventionally named Egeria (*c*.381–384), who may have been a female ascetic from Spain (Galicia), repeatedly insisted that the biblical readings and hymns were always appropriate for the day and the place (*apta diei et loco*) (Baldovin 1987: 45–104; Smith 1987: 86–95; Wharton 1995: 85–94; see Day, Chapter 32 in this volume). More importantly for present purposes, a liturgical procession preceded many of these stations. Following a regular calendrical cycle, groups of Christians processing from one sacred place to another would fill the streets of Jerusalem with crosses and hymns, claiming the streets and marking places with Christian significance.

At Jerusalem, liturgically related movement ran the gamut from un-ritualized walking to spectacular ceremony. On the fiftieth day after Easter, 'all the people … go up Eleona, the Mount of Olives, each at his own pace' (*It. Eg*. 43.4). By contrast, Egeria described ritual processions with what seems to be a quasi-technical phrase, to go 'with hymns' (*cum ymnis*), to emphasize their ritualized character—a clear contrast with her near contemporaries at Rome, Jerome's schoolmates and Prudentius' crowds (e.g. *It. Eg*. 27.6, 31.1, 35.4, 39.4, 40.1–2). And so, after the services on the Mount of Olives at which people simply gathered at their own pace,

> All the people, every single one of them, go down with their bishop, singing hymns and antiphons suitable to that day, and so, slowly, slowly, they make their way to the Martyrium. When, however, they arrive at the city gate, it is already night, and the people are brought hundreds of church lamps to help them. It is quite a way from the gate to the Great Church, the Martyrium, and they arrive there at about eight at night, going very slowly all the way so that the walk does not make the people tired. The great doors which face the market street are opened, and the bishop and all the people enter the Martyrium singing. (*It. Eg*. 43.6–7; Wilkinson 1999: 160)

As this example suggests, liturgical processions at Jerusalem could be fairly elaborate, with hymns and antiphons as well as lamps and a slow, stately walk that might or might not have had anything to do with fatigue—several centuries earlier Cicero suggested that some adopted a pompous gait in order to impress, which may help to explain the pace in this procession (*Fin*. 2.77; *Sest*. 19; *Pis*. 24).

Filling the streets with song and light, such processions would have been a particularly important means of transforming Aelia Capitolina, Jerusalem as re-founded by Hadrian, into a Christian Holy City (Jacobs 2004). As Victor Saxer remarked, 'In transporting crosses, candelabras, censers, and even sacred images out of the churches, while chanting hymns and psalms in route across the city, one attempts to sacralize, even more than the strictly liturgical space of the churches, the streets, the squares, indeed the entire

city' (2001: 139). These liturgically framed urban experiences endowed certain people and places with special significance. And, like Geertz's wolves and tigers, these stational processions also marked territory, claiming it for the bishop and his people.

Competing Christian Processions

Outside the stational liturgy at Jerusalem, Christian processions often seemed to develop in the midst of conflict and contest, again as a way to claim territory and construct authority. During John Chrysostom's episcopacy (398–404), Constantinople witnessed such duelling processions (Brubaker 2001; Andrade 2010). Chrysostom's theological opponents, having been denied the right to hold services in the city proper, staged remarkable nighttime vigils followed by processions which, seemingly, skirted the restrictions of imperial law and laid claim to the city. According to the fifth-century church historian Socrates, the so-called Arians

> congregated within the city gates near the porticoes, and sang antiphonal verses, which they adapted to Arian doctrine. They did this for most of the night; then at dawn, reciting the same antiphons, they paraded through the middle of the city, and so exited the gates to go to their places of assembly. (Socrates Scholasticus, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.8)

Chrysostom, apparently afraid that his congregation would be attracted by these performances, instituted more elaborate processions in which participants chanted hymns while holding 'silver crosses which held lighted tapers acquired with funds from the empress Eudoxia [the very empress who also supposedly supported Porphyry]' (Socrates Scholasticus, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.8). One night during these competing processions, an actual fight broke out and Briso, an imperial eunuch and chorus-leader, was injured. After that brawl, the so-called Arians were denied the right to chant their hymns in public (and in procession one assumes) for fear of future disturbances. At Rome, Christian processions seem to have been similarly spurred by contests for episcopal authority and control of civic space, though the earliest Christian procession there seems to have taken place much later, in 556 CE (Latham 2012). In sum, processions, which deployed Lefebvre's entire spatial triad, were particularly apt means to construct, contest, and claim civic space.

Christianizing Imperial Ceremony

In addition to newly created processions, some pre-existing civic ceremonies were inflected with Christian elements—that is, they were Christianized. For example, the imperial *adventus* ceremony which greeted emperors arriving at a city was, eventually, Christianized by its 'depaganization' (the elimination of sacrifice) as well as its

adaptation: the addition of the bishop to the ceremony and the inclusion of churches in the itinerary. Indeed, similar ceremonies calqued on imperial ritual also greeted arriving relics and bishops (see Eastman, Chapter 39 in this volume).

In a 'typical' imperial ceremony, a group of civic dignitaries and a large swath of citizens greeted the arriving ruler outside the city walls and then conducted him to its political core—the Forum at Rome, for example—after which, it seems, some sort of ancient Mediterranean traditional religious ritual, typically a sacrifice, was conducted (MacCormack 1981; Dey 2015). Though the evidence is tendentious, it seems that Constantine *may* have eliminated an ascent to the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitol at Rome and its attendant sacrifice (Latham 2017). Constantine's possible 'depaganization' and other acts of 'secularization' seem to have allowed the ritual to endure, unlike the Marneion, whose physical structure and ritual practices were utterly extirpated.

However, the *adventus* was not immediately and everywhere 'depaganized'. In 388 at Emona, a northern Italian city, traditional Roman priests, '*flamines* venerable in municipal purple [and] priests distinguished by miters', greeted Emperor Theodosius as part of a classical *occursus* (welcoming party), though the 'pagan' priesthoods could have been occupied by Christians (*Panegyrici Latini* 2[12].37.4). An assembly of civic notables and others, including non-Christian priesthoods, greeted Theodosius, though sacrifice in a sanctuary at an altar before an image was, probably, eliminated given the emperor's stern religious sentiments. By means of such adaptation, a largely classical *adventus* seems to have survived through the fifth century—or, at least, the *occursus* (especially at Rome) continued to be described in classical terms until then—even as other elements of the ritual were Christianized.

According to Constantine Porphyrogennetos' *Book of Ceremonies*, a reliable tenth-century compilation of earlier materials, in 457, Leo was acclaimed emperor at Constantinople in explicitly Christian terms by the army, imperial officials, and the bishop and then crowned, after which Leo made his way back into the city with two stops along the way at churches. After the second station, the emperor headed to a palace just outside the walls where he changed into civilian, imperial attire and then mounted a carriage which conducted him into the city preceded by crosses. As he entered the city, the emperor, escorted by civic and imperial officials, was greeted by the urban prefect and senate at the Forum of Constantine, from which the procession continued to Hagia Sophia, where the newly proclaimed emperor was crowned again, this time by the bishop (*Cer*. 410.5–415.14).

The initial acclamations of Leo may derive from his accession in 457, but the remainder of the ceremony seems to be a generic protocol for an accession *adventus* from the early fifth century (*Cer*. 412.18–415.14; Bauer 2001: 40–6). And so, it would appear that by the early fifth century, Christian practices (prayer), places (churches), and symbols (crosses) clearly marked the procession and itinerary of a special kind imperial entry (an accession) at Constantinople. Notably, however, the *occursus* at the Forum of Constantine was still entirely traditional, consisting of the urban prefect and Senate with, one assumes, a large crowd assembled in whatever space remained.

The first imperial (or royal) *occursus* to include the bishop in its number appears to have been the arrival of the Ostrogoth king Theodoric at Rome in 500 CE. According to the *Anonymus Valesianus*: 'King Theodoric, most dedicated as if catholic, traveled to Rome and met blessed Peter. Pope Symmachus and the entire senate and Roman people met him most joyfully outside the city' (*Anonymus Valesianus: Chronica Theodericiana* 65). In this *adventus*, the bishop of Rome headed an otherwise traditional *occursus*. At the same time, the passage hints that St Peter's might have served as an extremely belated substitute for the Capitoline temple, after nearly two centuries (Liverani 2013). In descriptions of the *adventus*, the *occursus* was typically construed as representative of the city, a civic cross-section, and so the inclusion of Symmachus—an embattled bishop in a contested election, support for whom motivated, in part, Theodoric's visit—meant that the episcopacy was now woven into the urban fabric. The bishop alongside a traditional, even republican, image of Rome (the Senate and Roman people or SPQR), could now stand for Rome as a whole.

The Christianization of existing ceremonies necessarily involved adaptation and accommodation. Both Leo's accession and Theodoric's *adventus* consisted of a kind of bricolage of classical and Christian traditions, which was characteristic of Christianization in the fourth and early-fifth centuries (Latham 2009; Croke 2010). Public ceremonies as civic representations had, by definition, to accommodate change in order to remain relevant, but any adaptation needed to maintain the recognizability of the ceremony. And so, the Christianization of the *adventus* may serve as a mirror of the Christianization of classical cities, a very long process marked by adaptation and accommodation on all sides that stretched over centuries.

Conclusion

Ritual itself did not change the physical fabric of the city or its governance, though temple destruction-church construction could be accompanied by ritual. Ritual could, however, affect patterns of thought and practice. The ritual Christianization of urban space re-configured the image of the city as a framework of knowledge (a representation of space) and as an organizer of activity (representational or lived space).

Sermons attempted to frame urban experience and even to re-value places, creating new representations of space—not always successfully to be sure, as even Chrysostom complained that chariot races still meant an empty church. Nonetheless, a pattern of sermonizing against, say, the theatre presumably contributed to an eventual limitation of theatrical performance—in conjunction with changing economic circumstances, of course (Brown 2012: 150–1). Similarly, Chrysostom's vitriol against synagogues need not have dissuaded his congregation from attendance, but it seemingly contributed to an increasingly hostile atmosphere in which synagogues were demonized as places of unspeakable horrors. Likewise, Damasus' *elogia* fostered Christian historical memory in a classical style, but only for those who made the trip to the martyr's tomb and read or

heard the inscription read. Would a 'pilgrim' on her way out to a *memoria martyrum* have turned around and looked back to see the increasingly dilapidated, but still monumental civic temples of Rome? Could she then have translated physical distance into conceptual difference? Perhaps. The rhetorical re-imagination of the city was a slow and fitful accumulative process.

Similar social realities constrained Christians processions as representations of space and their impact on representational, lived spaces—in short, their effect on the image of the city was limited. No one procession wholly Christianized any city, but a regular liturgical calendar, augmented on occasion by ad hoc parades, might do so. Over time, processions could impact both conceptions of the city and urban habits; insofar as the cortege was accepted as a civic self-representation and the itinerary as marker and maker of urban significance. As they wound their way through the city, processions wove together spaces and institutions, monuments and people. The processional participants claimed to be the city, even as the procession claimed the city. A whole liturgical calendar replete with such processions could slowly impact the urban imaginary and civic practices.

In the end, the ritual Christianization of cities seems to have truly begun in the late-fourth century, several generations after Constantine, and continued well into the long late antiquity—indeed in many respects it never ended. Constantine enabled the Christianization of classical cities with financial resources to construct monumental churches—relatively few in the fourth century, but a number that would, of course, grow over the centuries—and legal authority to allow the bishop to develop as a civic power. Despite such support, the Christianization of urban space was a slow and stuttering process, in part because pre-existing monuments and buildings, civic authorities, and modes of place-making continued more or less unabated through the fourth century, diminishing in the fifth and, especially, the sixth centuries. As traditional urbanism slowly 'declined', for reasons that may be unassociated with Christianity or Christianization, Christian adaptations and alternatives began to emerge (Liebeschuetz 2001; Inglebert 2015). Justinian's reign—during which the consulship, Neoplatonic philosophical schools at Athens, and classical Roman spectacle all effectively ended—may serve as a convenient terminus. Non-Christian place-making practices disappeared bit-by-bit in the centuries after Constantine, eventually leaving the field (or rather the city) to Christianity.

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